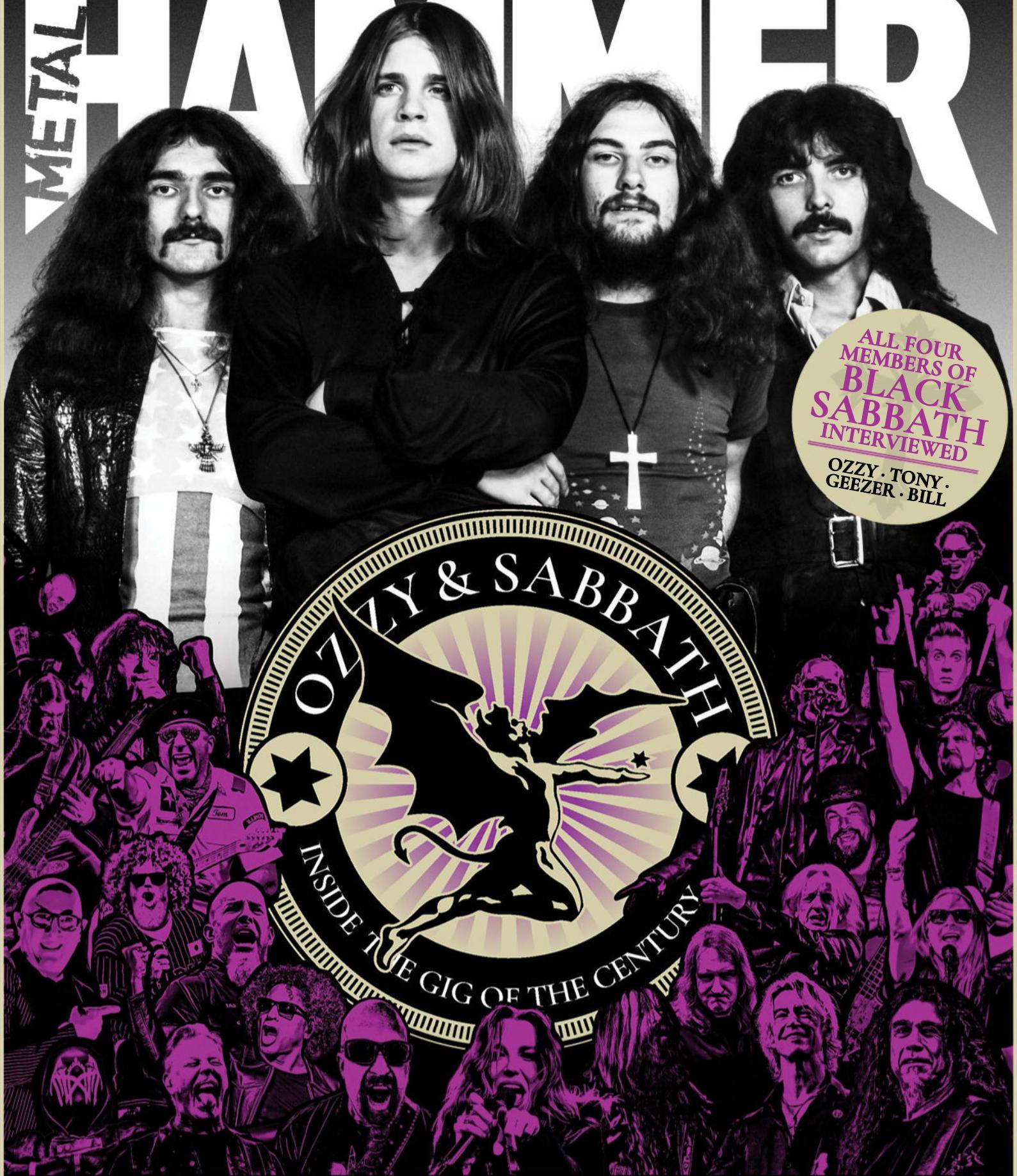


ALL-STAR

Back To The
Beginning

BLOWOUT

METAL HAMMER



ALL FOUR
MEMBERS OF
**BLACK
SABBATH**
INTERVIEWED

OZZY. TONY.
GEEZER. BILL



LZZY HALE, RANDY BLYTHE, BRANN DAILOR & JOE DUPLANTIER: IN CONVERSATION . INSIDE OZZY'S SOLO CAREER . PLUS! TOM MORELLO, ROBERT TRUJILLO, ZAKK WYLDE, KERRY KING, JERRY CANTRELL, DUFF McKAGAN, SCOTT IAN, TOBIAS FORGE & MORE



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OZZY & TONY & GEEZER & BILL.

WHAT CAN YOU say to sum up the legacy of a person and a band who birthed a genre, and have lived a lifetime in service to heavy metal? On July 5, Ozzy Osbourne will say farewell to performing with Back To The Beginning: a huge charity celebration show at Birmingham's Villa Park, as the original line-up of Black Sabbath play together for the final time, in addition to appearances from their famous friends. It's going to be the gig of the century.

In anticipation of that special day, we spoke to all four members of Sabbath about their incredible journey, as well as remembering the big hits and bitten bats of Ozzy's solo career. And to help us explain why Ozzy and Sabbath are such icons, we asked the guests who'll be appearing on July 5 to pay tribute in their own way. In this issue, you'll read about why Lzzy Hale sees Tony Iommi and Geezer Butler as uncles, why Rob Trujillo credits Ozzy with co-creating his crab walk, why Sabbath are the only band to have left Kerry King speechless, and much, much more.

July 5 will truly be a show for the ages. Thank you, Ozzy Osbourne and Black Sabbath.

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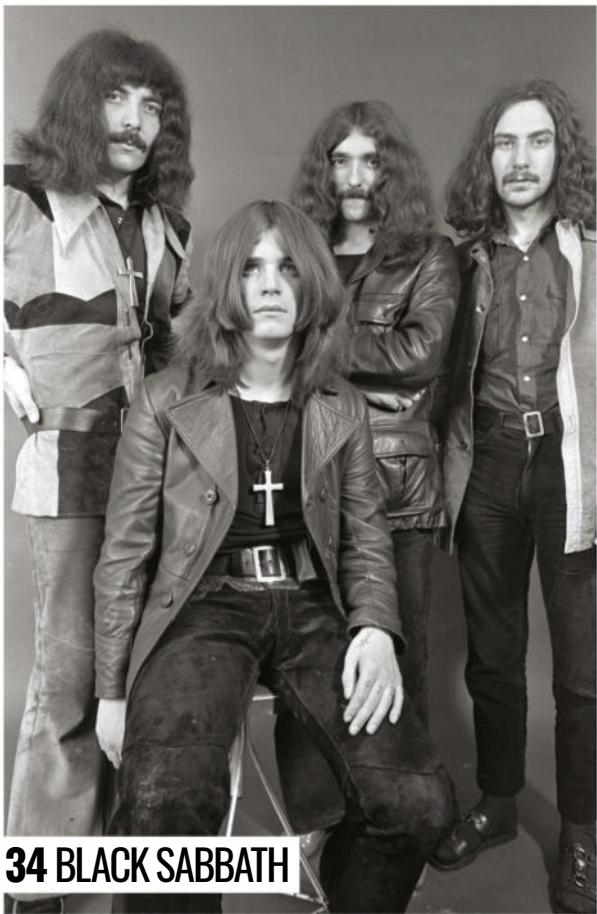
DAVE EVERLEY
 ASSOCIATE EDITOR
 Dave interviewed all four members of Sabbath for our very special cover, as well as overseeing the star-studded features on these pages. We bet the letters b, l, a, c, k, s, t and h have worn off his keyboard.



ABBI DRAPER-SCOTT
 PHOTOGRAPHER
 The excellent Abbi got in the pit for us this month to shoot the ever-brilliant, ever-gothic Creeper at Koko, where the band said goodbye to their *Sanguivore* era. Only to usher in... a second *Sanguivore* era!



STEPHEN HILL
 WRITER
 Steve hosted our exclusive conversation between Lzzy Hale, Joe Duplantier, Brann Dailor and Randy Blythe, and teased out all their best Black Sabbath stories. Turn to p.46 to read about Brann's mum's skull mask!



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THE BIG PICTURE A BRAVE NEW WORLD

THE FIRST NIGHT of any Iron Maiden world tour is worth getting excited about, but there was undoubtedly an extra smidge of anticipation in the air for night one of Run For Your Lives. Not just the first stop on an epic celebration of 50 years of Maiden, here was the first chance to see new drummer Simon Dawson behind the kit following the retirement of Nicko McBrain – not to mention witness the debut of Maiden's dazzling new stage show. And what a show it was: the second a giant, state-of-the-art LCD screen lit up the Budapest Arena, showing off the murky backstreets of East London in gloomy

yellow hues, it was clear this was a Maiden gig unlike any other.

"The whole fucking world is watching this," beamed Bruce Dickinson, following a ferocious opening barrage of early Maiden bangers ignited by a ripping *Murders In The Rue Morgue*. What followed was an all-time classic Maiden setlist (*Clairvoyant!* *Mariner!* *Seventh Son!*) and some of the most impressive visuals we've seen at any major metal show, culminating in a towering, digital *Piece Of Mind* Eddie that you'd swear was about to burst out of the screen. It was Maiden alright, just not quite as you know them. **H**





THE HOT TOPIC

RAISE YOUR HORNS

As Wacken fast approaches, we find out how a small gathering in Germany evolved into one of the world's biggest metal fests

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

WHEN THOMAS JENSEN

co-founded Wacken Festival in 1990, the idea was simple. Book a few bands, get some beers in, and invite some mates to have the time of their lives. Thirty-five years later, the idea is still the same, except those 'mates' have ballooned to 85,000 metal fans.

"It's pretty crazy," he admits, bristling with pride. "I can't believe how much it's grown."

Growing up, Thomas became obsessed with legendary performances. Queen at Wembley Stadium; Led Zeppelin at Knebworth; Motörhead at Hammersmith. But the chances of anything like that coming to his hometown – Wacken, a small village about an hour's drive north of Hamburg – were slim to none. So, in 1988, Thomas flew out to Donington to attend Monsters Of Rock. Headlined by Iron Maiden and Kiss, the iconic festival only cemented Thomas's ambitions to bring the music he loved to his hometown.

"It was incredible," he enthuses. "During [David Lee] Roth's set, you could see Maiden building their set and it looked amazing."

"WE GOT GOJIRA BEFORE THEY'D EVEN BEEN INVITED TO DO THE OLYMPICS"

A year later, Thomas and co-founder Holger Hübner started making plans to host an event. The inaugural Wacken, held on August 24-25, 1990, had just six bands – mostly local – and attracted 800 people. This year's four-day bill in July/August will be headlined by Guns N' Roses, Machine Head, Gojira and Papa Roach, with a crowd of 85,000.

The festival might attract seasoned headliners, but Thomas also wants to give established bands a chance to step up. Last year, they showed they were ahead of the curve by getting Korn to headline (they close Download and top the bill at Hellfest this year). Now, Papa Roach will be the next nu metal stars to get the bump up to headliner status in the 2020s.

"Papa Roach is a great one for us," Thomas says. "The team have been wanting them for a long time, so we're really happy that they're finally confirmed. We also got Gojira before they'd even got the invite for the Olympics. I had no idea they were doing it; I'd been doing interviews, and had the TV on with a cup of tea and the sound off. All of a sudden I saw this strange thing – 'Hey, that looks like a metal band... Holy shit, Gojira at the Olympics!' I had to crank up the volume. I think it's great."

Over the last three decades, many bands have risen through Wacken's ranks. Amon Amarth first played the festival in 1999 on one of the small stages. Last year, they headlined to the sight of 85,000 fans rowing in a field.



Thomas Jensen loves it when a plan comes together!



When Jinjer played in 2019, their early morning slot opening the Louder stage attracted an enormous crowd that confirmed the colossal buzz around the Ukrainian band. They returned in 2023 to an even bigger crowd on one of the festival's two main stages.

In 2004, Wacken established the Metal Battle, which invites bands from around the world to compete and earn a chance to play at the festival. And with eight stages plus sideshow entertainment, there are many other international acts in the mix – Indian nu metallers Bloodywood planned their first overseas tour around a set there in 2019.

"That's our duty; to push the boundaries a bit," Thomas says. "This year we've got Hanabie coming from Japan, Skynld coming from Australia and singing about real crime. If you'd



told me we would get these kinds of bands in 1990... It's great just how diverse the scene is now. The beauty of a festival is being able to put all those kinds of bands together and have people discover new things as they walk by a stage."

The Wacken site is now so large, it also takes over the neighbouring villages of Gribbohm, Bokelrehm and Holstenniendorf. It includes a post-apocalyptic-themed area called the Wasteland – complete with performers in *Mad Max*-style gear called the Wasteland Warriors – and a medieval village called Wackinger. There's a farmer's market, an outdoor swimming pool and a full metal church!

As Wacken's profile has grown, multiple documentaries have been made – and screened – at the festival. *Metal Hammer* made our own short film in 2015, which can be found on our YouTube channel. Meanwhile, the 2024 metal comedy *Heavier Trip* is all about the protagonists' journey to play there.

Thomas has seen the scene weather ups and downs, with interest in metal rising and falling – but he's excited about the state it's in at the moment. With bands such as Sleep Token and

Ghost landing No.1 albums, there's an influx of fans.

"There's a lot of great festivals out there now, and I'm glad to see the development of places like Bloodstock or even some of the smaller independent festivals," he says. "I remember when I managed Saxon [Thomas looked after the NWOBHM legends from 2000–2016], we'd only be able to put on shows in Wolverhampton and London, that'd pretty much be it. Things are so much healthier now for the metal scene than at the beginning of the century, let's put it that way."

Next summer, Wacken celebrates its 35th birthday, having missed a couple of years to Covid. According to Thomas, it'll be the biggest one yet.

"It's going to be great," Thomas says with a smile. "The whole point of the festival was to put on a party with our mates and listen to the music we love – and we're still doing it." **H**

GUNS N' ROSES, MACHINE HEAD, GOJIRA AND PAPA ROACH HEADLINE WACKEN 2025. THE FESTIVAL RUNS FROM JULY 30 TO AUGUST 2. FOR THE FULL LINE-UP VISIT WACKEN.COM

HAMMER STEREO

What's been blowing our office speakers

SLAUGHTER TO PREVAIL

Grizzly

"The bear-obsessed bruisers deliver the goods"

ELEANOR GOODMAN
EDITOR



THE YOUNG GODS

Appear Disappear

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"Cheese-free power metal for the 21st century from the OGs"

DAVE EVERLEY
ASSOCIATE EDITOR





WHAT DO YOU SERVE?

From shark obsessions to Fatman Scoop, Employed To Serve's Justine Jones and Sammy Urwin take on your questions

WORDS: DANNII LEIVERS • PICTURES: JAKE OWENS

EMPLOYED TO SERVE are veterans of the underground metal scene, but with their excellent, big, bold and heavy new album, *Fallen Star*, they've made the jump to a brand new level. *Hammer* sat down with the band's founders, vocalist Justine Jones and guitarist Sammy Urwin – who also run one of the UK's most exciting independent labels, Church Road Records – to ask them your questions.

What do you serve?

Jason Key, Facebook

Sammy: "We serve riffs..."

Justine: "I like to think smiles as well, delivering them in different ways, be it with our wit or riffs. And hard truths!"
Sammy: "Riffs and good times. It's a much-needed service."

All those guest singers on the new album, but where's Gojira?

Alex Heppe, email

Justine: "If I can think of a song [on the album] that Joe was going to feature on, it'd be *Brother, Stand Beside Me*. But we didn't want to seem too needy."
Sammy: "They'd already thrown us a two-month bone. [Employed To Serve supported Gojira on their UK/European tour in 2022.] Also, we don't want to get guests in where it's contrived. It only happens if it makes sense."

What was your last full-time job that wasn't in music?

Joe Jones, email

Sammy: "I was a gardener for many, many years. I could take as much

unpaid leave as I wanted to, and no matter the climate, financially, everyone still needs a gardener."

Justine: "I worked for an Apple reseller, and before that, at a call centre. It was a temp job, so I'd rack up 100 calls a day, get paid and be like, 'See you later. I'm going to Europe!' Any job I had, even if it was a menial job, I was the sickest at it so they wouldn't fire me. I needed the money to pay for the van and petrol."

On *Fallen Star*, you've teamed up with Lorna Shore's Will Ramos. Which other artists/bands would you love to collaborate with?

Hayley Watts, Facebook

Justine: "Korn or Jonathan Davis. I'm a huge Korn fan..."

Sammy: "Would he be singing or would he be scatting?"

Justine: "Both. I want the full works. And he has to wear a kilt for the vocal takes, otherwise it's not authentic."

Sammy: "We've been writing new material and we've got a song where all I hear is [Cradle Of Filth vocalist] Dani Filth doing the 'Filth Scream'. He's got that certain something only he can do."

HAMMER: Are you going to ask him to feature on it?

Sammy: "Hopefully, when the time is right, we're sowing the seeds now."

What's your pre-gig ritual?

Artworkcraftwork_jb, Instagram

Justine: "I have a four-and-a-half-hour hype playlist. I created it on one of the Gojira dates where we had a 13-hour drive. The flow is ideal. It has Fatman Scoop, Destiny's Child, TLC, Missy Elliott, Beyoncé, Sean Paul..."

Sammy: "From the minute we're at the venue, I've got that surge of excitement building for the show. I've got to keep that buzz going from soundcheck 'til we play, because if you sit down in the green room and sprawl out, you just scroll, and if you've been on tour for a while, the tiredness hits. I'll watch the support bands, chat shit with whoever else is on the tour, and then I'm just shouting to Fatman Scoop, essentially."

Of all the places to visit in Woking [Justine and Sammy's hometown], what's your collective favourite?

Chris Charles, Facebook

Justine: "The Sovereigns pub. It's one of Woking's oldest buildings and has a rich history. Horsell Common too, which is where the aliens landed in H. G. Wells' *War Of The Worlds*. It's where we used



Employed To Serve (left to right):
Casey McHale, Nathan Pryor, David
Porter, Justine Jones, Sammy Urwin

Sammy Urwin and Justine Jones: metal's number one power couple



**“WE USED TO WALK
OUR DOG WHERE THE
MARTIANS LANDED IN
WAR OF THE WORLDS”**

JUSTINE JONES

EMPLOYED TO SERVE

to walk our dog. For some reason, when they shot the movie with Tom Cruise, they didn't come to Woking..."

What are your respective favourite songs on the new album?

Logan_Anderson_261, Instagram

Justine: "Mine is *Familiar Pain*. I wanted it to be a single. When we recorded the album, that was the one I was humming all the time. It felt like *The Hunter*-era Mastodon, like *Curl Of The Burl*."

Sammy: "I'll go for *Last Laugh*, [with Svalbard's Serena Cherry] because you could call it the curveball of the album. In the flow of the record, it fits perfectly, but it's different from the rest.

Obviously you've got to keep cohesion as a band, but we try to work new ideas and new influences in where we can."

HAMMER: How do you feel the new record reflects the band's evolution?

Sammy: "One of the big things for us was dynamics. We wanted this album to have more light and shade compared to [2021's] *Conquering*. Justine's vocals do a great job of keeping us rooted in the ETS sound, because you know it's her when she's doing her thing, but we were hoping *Fallen Star* would have a little bit of everything we've done. We've incorporated more traditional metal sounds."

Justine: "I like the idea that we're in our 'Live, Laugh, Love' era. We're a middle-aged band. We've been going for 14 years, not that we're going to stop when we're 30 years old, but we're having a really good time."

What's your favourite movie, and why?

Louise Walters, email

Justine: "Jurassic Park. I first saw it when I was eight or something, and I was inspired. My first obsession was dinosaurs after that film. It's a comfort watch, incredible one-liners... and Jeff Goldblum's so hot."

Sammy: "My favourite is *Jaws*. Every character rocks and has a memorable line. I was obsessed with *Jaws* as a kid; it led to me being obsessed with sharks."

Justine: "Both very metal films; sharks and dinosaurs..."

Will you tour in the US?

Stacy_1371, Instagram

Justine: "We were supposed to in 2020 with *Fit For An Autopsy*, then Covid happened. We want to. It's just a

Justine and Sammy:
living, laughing, loving



haemorrhaging money situation. We've just got to make it financially viable."

Sammy: "We're hoping next year."

Justine: "If Spotify is anything to go by, a lot of our fanbase are American."

Why is British metalcore not as well-known as its US counterpart?

Retro Paul, email

Sammy: "Before the internet and social media, breaking America was a thing, but I don't think it's much of a thing now. You've got UK bands like Loathe, Static Dress and Sleep Token. Now we're cooking up legends from both sides of the pond."

Justine: "Fucking Bring Me The Horizon, Architects..."

Are we betraying the scene if we remove our battle jacket in the summer to avoid heatstroke at festivals? Should we stay committed no matter how hot it gets?

SherwoodMagazine, Instagram

Justine: "Stay committed but with no shirt. Take the t-shirt off, put the battle jacket on. Put SPF on the shoulders, though – sunburn's not a good vibe."

How do you feel about your debut album [*Greyer Than You Remember*] 10 years on?

Ollie Sherwood, email

Sammy: "I feel incredibly proud of it, and still absolutely love it."

Justine: "It was our first proper time in a studio. My vocal style is not sustainable on that record, you can hear the shredding of the vocal cord, but I learned."

Best piece of advice you could give to your younger self?

Jazz Giblin, email

Sammy: "Enjoy everything. And it sounds dumb to say, but you've got to put the effort into making sure you enjoy it, and make sure you don't get jaded, because the key to this game is longevity. You're only going to last if you're having fun and you want to carry on doing it, otherwise you'll burn out."

Justine: "Also, if something small happens that annoys you, but you won't remember it in a year's time, it's not worth worrying about."

Has working on your own label changed how you approach your band?

Amyanne Richards, email

Justine: "It makes me appreciate everything we have. I get excited because we work with a lot of bands who are getting their firsts, and it makes me remember when we got our firsts. Any new bit of press we get, I still get stoked."

Sammy: "I've a greater understanding now of behind the scenes. I feel more confident in what we're doing in the band because of all the other stuff that I now know. With knowledge comes great power, right?"

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SAMMY URWIN

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MANUEL GAGNEUX

The genre-agnostic mastermind behind *Zeal & Ardor*
gives us a tour of his quirky record collection

WORDS: PERRAN HELYES • PICTURES: NOÉMI OTTILIA SZABO

“AS A TEENAGER, being really obscure and mysterious was appealing to me, but I’m thankful because that douchebaggedness granted me a weird library of music. I saw **HOT HEAD SHOW** opening for Les Claypool around 15 years ago, and they just blew my mind and bestowed on me this fervour of wanting to do music. Their song *Bummer* is such a wacky track, and it doesn’t care about genre or if something is weird. I found that infectious enough to want to be that and take that on myself. I am just a fraud, a copy and a scam artist!

“*Planemo* by **THE BOOK OF KNOTS** has Mike Patton on it, one of his 18,000 projects, and it’s a slow build that explodes into this eerie, heavy catharsis, with this inhumane vocal line that is really, really good. It’s such a heavy track and I really love the pathos of it all, where a song can transport you to a different place. I heard that right around writing [second *Zeal & Ardor* album, 2018’s] *Stranger Fruit*, and it made me consider digging more into that aspect of songwriting.

“A not-so-fun one is *Every Day Is Exactly The Same* by **NINE INCH NAILS**. That song actually made me quit my day job. I was working doing shitty SQL data entry stuff, which I sucked at, and on the commute I was listening to *With Teeth* when that song came on. Literally the next day I quit the fucking job, because that [title] line just hit me. I think Trent Reznor did a lot for the job market that year!

“There is a funk instrumental song, *One In Seven* by **SOULIVE**, which is in a seven time signature. You think it’s gonna be a douchey musician song and have a cumbersome count for the track that doesn’t flow, but that one really does. It’s rare to have odd meters in music where it’s not a stunt based around that musical athleticism, but this is in service to the song, and that one made me love odd meters and trying to make them not a stunt but something you can enjoy.

“I was about 12 years old when *The Rite of Spring* by **IGOR STRAVINSKY** was being played in my hometown, and I was made to go. I wanted to kill myself over the idea of going to the theatre and listening to classical music, but it ripped. You can hear the beginnings of a rock’n’roll attitude in that music, because at the time it was the heaviest shit, and it still has that heft to it. Every instrument has 50 people on it aggressively hitting one note at the same time, and that’s fucking cool. Stravinsky was a weird, weird fellow who reminds me of James Joyce, in that he just did whatever he wanted to.

“I got into *Doggg* by **SEBASTIAN** 10-ish years ago, when he joined onto the same label, Ed Banger Records, as Justice and artists from that French house scene. This track in particular integrates metalcore music a bit though, and I adored the combination of metal elements and electronica. He did that quite a while ago, and as we all know, that’s taking off quite well now, with stuff like Perturbator and Carpenter Brut. It tries to integrate a metalcore breakdown with maybe varying success, but I commend the effort. If you ever DJ and want to vacate the premises, this is a very efficient choice. It happened to me... twice.

“*My Fair Lady* by **THE BIRD AND THE BEE** is a soft, poppy number, but the two artists who make up this band are into this 1960s tropicana from people like Henry Mancini, who did *The Pink Panther* music, where it’s essentially like a fantasy of what tropical music is. *My Fair Lady* has this champagne chic air to it that I adore, but The Bird And The Bee combined it with a pop element with these intricate vocal harmonies – that’s a really ethereal sound, that I haven’t heard much ever since.

“[When it comes to the black metal side of *Zeal & Ardor*], of course there’s **DARKTHRONE**, a small indie thing that no one really knows. *Transilvanian Hunger* was a huge part of getting me into that music. There’s also the Swedish band **NAGLFAR**, and opening their album *Sheol* there’s a track called *I Am Vengeance*,

which was my teen-era anthem. I love that track to bits, and can still listen to it now and get ridiculously pumped. Their melodic writing has this faux orientalism to it – if I write black metal parts, I can’t shake that inkling, and that is 100% them.

“We were on tour with **OPETH** when they played *Blackwater Park* for the first time since I don’t know when. That was insane! I know Mikael Åkerfeldt just said that it’s one of the more overrated Opeth songs, but it’s like Uno correcting people on social media that you can’t stack +4 cards. OK, that’s your opinion, but just make the cards and let us play! It keeps happening that I’ve been able to tour with bands where I am so excited to see them play a particular song every night, like Mastodon or Meshuggah, and not only do we have the coolest job in the world where we get to yell at strangers and they like it, but we also get to experience formative music like that live. There’s something sacred in that.” **H**

ZEAL & ARDOR PLAY RADAR FESTIVAL ON JULY 4



As you might expect, Manuel's
song choices are wild

CRADLE OF FILTH are one of the few bands to not only recognise extreme metal's bombast, but fully lean into it. Where so many peers screamed in all seriousness about Satan and gore, Dani Filth's act wove Victorian horror tales with bold string sections and operatic vocals.

Their face paint and bondage gear made the whole package too OTT to ignore, and within a handful of albums the band were the mainstream's shorthand for audial maximalism. Dani and his gremlins have now spent more than three decades haunting metal's front lines, and these are the lessons he's picked up along the way.

MAKE SURE YOU CHOOSE YOUR STAGE NAME CAREFULLY

"When did I start calling myself Dani Filth? I think it was around *Cruelty And The Beast*, which came out in '98. People started to refer to me in the press as Dani Filth, so I just put it down in the album booklet. It stuck pretty quickly, but it's been a bit embarrassing. The postman sees it all the time. I get parcels for 'Dani Filth', 'Count Filth'... 'Count Backwards'. Ha ha ha!"

SUFFOLK IS DRIPPING IN SPOOKINESS

"I lived in a village called Hadleigh for a long while, up to the point we recorded [2000 album] *Midian*. It was a big inspiration: the whole place is very spooky. I lived in a Georgian manor at one point – unfortunately, I just had an apartment there – and then in one wing of a 16th-century cottage. Matthew Hopkins [infamous witch-hunter, and inspiration for Vincent Price's 1968 horror film *Witchfinder General*] apparently stayed in that very house at one point in his illustrious career."

IT SUCKS FALLING OUT OF LOVE WITH SOMETHING

"I enjoyed school until I got to sixth form and got a bit too rebellious. We had a chaplain there and I purposefully wound him up by wearing controversial t-shirts. I've had a recurring nightmare where I see my exams and haven't done anything. I think back to it when I wake up and go, 'You know what? That was pretty much true.' Ha ha ha!"

STICK IT TO THE MAN

"Around 15, 16, 17, I listened to American hardcore, thrash metal and everything. It was our gaggle of skateboarders that got that law made: 'Skateboarding is not a crime' or whatever. Ours was the first village, apparently, in England that installed CCTV, just to spot us skateboarding! And they went to such lengths that they actually put all this shit on the road. It was like gravel, but it was in the tarmac. People were pissed off because they had to drive their cars over it! It was just so we didn't skateboard down the high street... which we did all the time."

IF YOU'RE IN MUM'S HOUSE, YOU STICK TO MUM'S RULES

"I used to have a dreadful punk band who rehearsed in my mum's living room. It was all fine and dandy until she got a new carpet and then our drummer forgot to put his mat down. He'd just oiled his new drum pedal. I tried covering the stain up – it was only a couple of days of pushing the sofa over it at a slightly obtuse angle before I was discovered. Never happened again."

used boot polish. That was not a good idea. It doesn't do your eyes much good."

...DON'T SHOVE SURFACE CLEANER INTO YOUR EYES

"It's been trial and error since then. Backstage at [1998 vampire festival] Vampyria II in Camden, someone swapped out my contact lens solution. I don't know what happened, but I put detergent in my eyes instead of contact lens solution. My eyes felt like they were being pricked with needles for a week."

NORWEGIAN BLACK METAL GAVE RED FLAGS FROM THE START

"I became pen pals with Euronymous [late Mayhem guitarist and Norwegian black metal ringleader, murdered by Burzum's Varg Vikernes in 1993] after sending our demo tape to him. He sent me a nice little letter, nothing overtly weird. I think he mentioned in his second letter how much he admired [notorious dictators] Pol Pot and Nicolae Ceaușescu for the way they could control the populace, but that's about as misanthropic as it got."

JUST BECAUSE IT'S A CLASSIC DOESN'T MEAN IT'S GOOD

"I got about three or four letters from Euronymous. I did have them in my copy of [Mayhem's debut EP] *Deathcrush*, until a wily character that I thought was a friend stole them from me a long time ago. I still have an original copy of the EP from 1987, but me and my friends just regarded it as a crappy thrash metal, death metal thing. Not once did we consider it black metal, other than it having a spiky logo with inverted crosses."

YOU SHOULD BE FREE TO WEAR WHAT YOU LIKE

"Around '99, they arrested someone in London for wearing a Cradle Of Filth 'Jesus Is A Cunt' shirt. He refused to take it off, mainly because he didn't have anything else to wear. They tried to prosecute him by reintroducing a by-law from the 17th century, which got everybody up in arms: 'This is like 1984! What happens if they want to prosecute me but can't? They will just find some other way of doing it?' Eventually it was thrown out of court, and he contacted us and we sent him another t-shirt. I think we paid his court expenses."

LEAVE THE ELDERLY ALONE

"Whilst we were filming [2001 horror movie] *Cradle Of Fear*, Alex [Chandon, director] came down to shoot a documentary for us. He got in his mind that old people were incredibly creepy, so he was going to turn up at a nursing home with a film crew and talk his way in. He rocked up at 11pm, pissed out of his head, trying to blag his way in. The guy on the door was completely bewildered and got a bit like, 'Guys, you need to fuck off!'"

DON'T DO DRUGS, KIDS

"We found some magic mushrooms while we were recording [2003's] *Damnation* ▶



LIFE LESSONS

DANI FILTH

Cradle Of Filth's corpsepainted frontman on his skate punk roots, exploding basketballs, and 11th-century ghosts

WORDS: MATT MILLS • PICTURES: JAKUB ALEXANDROWICZ

IF AT FIRST YOU DON'T SUCCEED...

"Cradle started wearing corpsepaint after about a year. At first it wasn't supposed to be corpsepaint: we were fans of goth stuff, the imagery more than the music. We looked a little bit like the more old-school bands, like Celtic Frost, where it was more sullen than full-on badger make-up. The first photoshoot we did, we didn't have any black paint, so we

"I PURPOSEFULLY WOUND UP THE SCHOOL CHAPLAIN"



That surface cleaner didn't do Dani
any long-term harm whatsoever...

Would you go mushroom gathering with this man?



“WE FOUND A FIELD FULL OF MAGIC MUSHROOMS”

And A Day near Battle [site of the Battle Of Hastings]. The whole field next to my chalet was full of them! I talked one of the guys in the band – who'd never, ever touched anything – into doing them and he spent the whole night talking to the wallpaper. We all decided, 'Why don't we walk into Battle? We might see some ghosts from the battle itself!' I don't remember much after that. It was immensely fun!"

ALWAYS LEAVE THINGS AS YOU FOUND THEM

*"We stole a cross from somewhere. If you look at our DVD [2005's *Peace Through Superior Firepower*], there's a bit of footage of our old keyboardist with this massive cross walking through the mist of the battlefield. It was pretty epic – even more epic on magic mushrooms. I think we got it from an English Heritage signpost, and if that's the case I think we returned it. Just doing our bit for the country."*

MONEY CAN MAKE YOU DO STRANGE THINGS

"Damnation... was on Sony's money, and it was good money. We went through a phase of carrying BB guns everywhere and shooting each other. We got in a lot of trouble: we found a milk churn and, when we bought these guns in a hunting shop, they also had these crowd-scarers [small explosives designed to keep birds off farmland]. We bought loads of them and dropped them into this milk churn with a basketball. The thing would fire up and it'd go beyond the clouds. It was that powerful!"

BEING IN A BAND IS ABOUT MUCH MORE THAN MUSIC

"What keeps Cradle fun after 30 years? The promise of the lease on my second yacht! The first one's getting terribly shabby. To be honest, I love it. It's a lifestyle and it doesn't stop at music. It's about literature, film, performance, so many things. There are so many hats you can wear in a band, and it's great embracing it all."

NOTHING LASTS FOREVER

"The pandemic was a bit of a reset button for me. You may have got a bit jaded at everything that's expected of you as a bandmember. Sometimes you're put in situations where you are like, 'Why am I dealing with this? I've just been put in front of 60 journalists in a foreign country with a translator, on my own!' Since then, I've been more appreciative and, to be completely honest with you, it's never going to last forever. Metal itself only stems back to Black Sabbath 55, 56 years ago. There's no blueprint for how long this could last." **H**

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THE STORY BEHIND

JUDAS RISING JUDAS PRIEST

The song that rebuilt the band for the 21st century

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

IF THE 90S was a decade of great change in metal, then the 2000s was the decade of the comeback. From Iron Maiden roaring back to power with Bruce Dickinson on *Brave New World*, to the likes of Slayer and Megadeth finding a triumphant second wind, heavy metal was rediscovering its roots after the wilderness years of grunge and nu metal, where even the standard-setting bands of the genre hit a rough patch.

“It was a weird time to be a metal band,” affirms Judas Priest bassist Ian Hill. “In the 80s, especially in America, you had all the Teslas and Skid Rows. All great bands, but it’d become fashionable and inevitably eventually it has to go out of fashion.”

Losing their iconic frontman, Rob Halford, probably didn’t help Priest’s prospects in the 90s either. Today, more than two decades on from his return to the fold, it’s hard to imagine Priest without the Metal God howling up front. But following the phenomenal success of 1990’s *Painkiller* – and its ensuing gruelling world tour – Rob shocked everyone by quitting the band with which he’d been shaping the metal world for 20 years.

“I didn’t quit!” Rob cries in mock indignation, recalling the turbulence of the early 90s with typical grace and good humour. “It was a case of LSD – Lead Singer’s Disease! I was in a great place and having a blast – *Painkiller* was one of the most successful tours we’d ever had. But we were all very knackered by the end of it and we agreed we’d take a break. So I said, ‘OK guys, I’m gonna go off and do a thing’

I’d actually said it around [1986’s] *Turbo* and was told, ‘OK, so long as it doesn’t interfere with what Priest are doing.’”

But although Rob was keen to explore other avenues in a solo project, it wasn’t that simple.

“The only way I could do that, at that time, was to send a ‘leaving member’ notice to the label,” he says. “It was just a clause in the contract basically. But everything blew up. ‘What do you mean you’re leaving?’ ‘I’m not!’ It got so ridiculously out of control. I think it was a knock-on effect from how knackered we were. We probably should have just walked away and gone, ‘See you in a year.’”

Instead, Rob was out of the band and Priest forged on without him. Recruiting vocalist Tim ‘Ripper’ Owens, they continued exploring the harder edge of *Painkiller* via 1997’s *Jugulator* and 2001’s *Demolition*. Meanwhile, Rob had cycled through the thrash-flavoured *Fight* and electronica-enhanced alt metal of *2wo* before settling back on his staple sound with Halford. But something was missing. It was greatest hits box set *Metalogy* that rebuilt the bridges between Rob and Priest, reforing one of metal’s most iconic bands when long-time Judas Priest manager Jayne Andrews called a meeting between the parties.

“The day me, Ken [K.K. Downing, guitars], Glenn [Tipton, guitars] and Jayne met in my little kitchen in my house in Walsall, to discuss the Priest box set *Metalogy*, was where it all came together,” Rob recalls. “This was the first time the three of us, including

THE FACTS

RELEASED: 2005

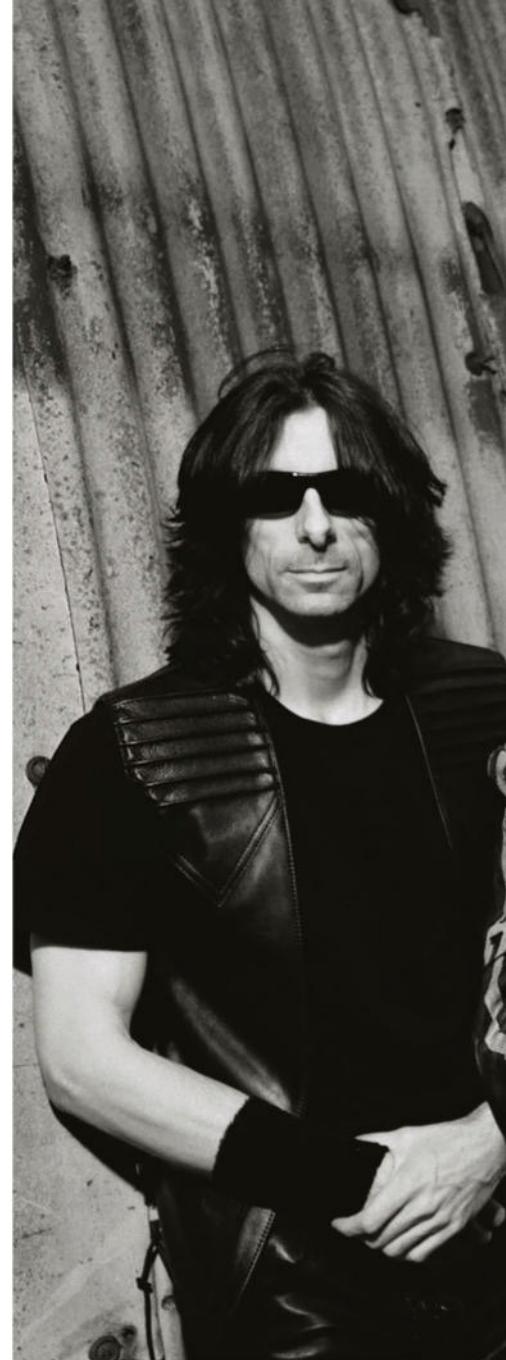
ALBUM: *Angel Of Retribution*

PERSONNEL:

Rob Halford (vocals),
Glenn Tipton (guitar),
K.K. Downing (guitar),
Ian Hill (bass),
Scott Travis (drums)



ANGEL OF RETRIBUTION



management, were sat in a room. Great things happen in kitchens! We had a cup of tea and some Hobnobs and by the end of business, Jayne said, ‘The elephant in the room is this question: Are you guys gonna get back together again?’ And in very Bad News/Spinal Tap fashion, we went, ‘Yeah, alright then.’”

Rob’s return was announced in July 2003. The band lined up festival appearances for the following summer, including a run of Ozzfest dates in the US with Ozzy Osbourne. Much of 2003 was spent rehearsing and preparing for the tour ahead.

“It was awkward... for about 10 seconds,” Ian recalls. “After that it was just like, ‘He’s come home!’ It was funny, because even Ripper thought it was a great idea, even if it put him out of a job.”

“We went down to Bray Studios, which used to be a big film studio where they made lots of the *Hammer* horrors,” Rob recalls. “When we went, they were making *Teletubbies*, so I went

PRESS



Judas Priest (left to right): Scott Travis, Glenn Tipton, Rob Halford, K.K. Downing, Ian Hill

to see that set so often it became, 'Can you get Rob off the bloody *Teletubbies* set, please?!"

"Those rehearsals were just wonderful," he continues. "I'm pretty sure that the first song we cranked out together, for the first time in over 15 years, was *Living After Midnight*. We just wanted a bang! It was glorious, hearing everything back in its place, everybody nodding to each other and smiling."

That joy was carried forward when, on June 2, 2004, Judas Priest played their first show with Rob Halford in 13 years at the Stadionsporthalle in Hanover, Germany.

"Everybody rejoiced!" Ian says. "The Ripper albums got a lot of flak – people would say, 'Well, that's why they don't play the enormodo dome anymore.' But we all suffered a little bit [during the 90s]. When Rob came back, it was immense news. It lifted us back up to where we probably should have been within the genre."

"Doing Ozzfest was magic for re-establishing the band in the US too," Rob adds. "What a phenomenal line-up too; Sabbath, Priest, Slayer, Slipknot..."

After the success of their tour, it was inevitable that Priest would get the itch to hit the studio and record together

E
S

again. In winter 2004, the members of Judas Priest headed to the Old Smithy studio in Worcestershire to see if they could bottle lightning again. Discussions quickly circled the idea of picking up where they'd left off with *Painkiller* almost 15 years earlier.

"We couldn't really continue with what we'd been doing with Ripper, we wanted it to feel like a fresh start," Ian admits.

"I'm putting the cat among the pigeons here, but after *Demolition* and *Jugulator* everybody wanted Priest to get back on track," Rob says. "There was tremendous comfort in being back with the guys, but we also knew there was a job to do."

For all the strife Priest had endured in the 90s, *Painkiller* was an undeniable career highlight for the band. Acknowledging the ascent of thrash and extreme metal, Priest had

"THEY SAID, 'CAN YOU GET ROB OFF THE BLOODY TELETUBBIES SET, PLEASE?!"'

ROB HALFORD

Riding back to glory!



managed to balance their traditional elements with a newfound heft that made the album feel fresh and vibrant.

"We'd been more experimental on *Turbo* and it'd lost us quite a few of our traditional fans," Ian admits. "But with *Ram It Down* and *Painkiller* we decided to go for a harder edge, which all culminated with *Painkiller* in 1990."

"Priest always had our ears to the ground, so to speak," Rob says. "We set ourselves a task to create a ruthless banger from start to finish, which I think is what *Painkiller* became. We looked through our history and asked ourselves, 'Have we still got it?' The answer was, 'Yes, and more!'"

So now they were asking that same question again... and finding much the same answer.

"The joy and excitement [from the tour] carried over," Rob says. "In the ensuing weeks and months we had lots of writing sessions. I always love putting metal meat on the metal skeleton. The second I heard them playing, it was like the last 15 years hadn't happened. It was my best mates again – no grudges, no complaints."

One track in particular seemed to crystallise the enthusiasm and excitement bubbling around Judas

Priest at that point. A hard-edged, dual guitar assault on the senses, *Judas Rising* was practically prophetic.

"I don't know where that title came from – possibly just the psychosis of being metal phoenixes rising from the ashes," Rob says. "It was the next dimension in Priest's timeline. I love the way it kicks off – everything fades in, giving you this anticipation. That's how I feel the fans must've felt, getting their favourite band back after forever. It was all a statement – the band's back, he's back... what else can you say? Judas is rising!"

"It put us back on track," Ian agrees. "It actually took away some of the harder edge we'd got with Ripper, where we'd have ended up being Slayer if that'd have carried on."

Released on February 23, 2005, *Angel Of Retribution* was the first Judas Priest album to feature Rob Halford in 15 years, and opening track *Judas Rising* proved the perfect reintroduction to the band that had helped shape heavy metal. The record broke the Top 40 in the UK, and peaked at No.13 on the US

"EVEN RIPPER THOUGHT IT WAS A GREAT IDEA, EVEN IF IT PUT HIM OUT OF A JOB"

IAN HILL

Billboard 200, heralding the band's glorious second coming that still continues today. More than 20 years on, Priest are still releasing phenomenal albums – most recently 2024's *Invincible Shield* – and are even lined up to play their biggest UK headline show to date in July at The O2 in London.

"I wonder what would've happened if Priest had stayed together?" Rob muses. "But it's all just hypothesising. I hate regret. Besides, *Angel Of Retribution* still makes my blood boil and my toes curl."

"We do it because we love it," Ian says resolutely. "We ain't stupid – we know we're getting older and haven't got a great deal of time left, but we'll do it as long as we can." **H**

JUDAS PRIEST WILL PLAY SCARBOROUGH ON JULY 23 AND ARE CO-HEADLINING THE O2 WITH ALICE COOPER ON JULY 25

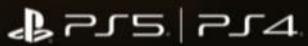
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PARADISE SLAVES

Former 36 Crazyfists frontman finds his second wind

WORDS: RICH HOBSON

ON DECEMBER 6, 2019, 36 Crazyfists played their final show. Celebrating their 25th anniversary as a band, they'd booked a gig at local bar Chilkoot Charlie's in their native Anchorage. Stepping onstage, they were greeted by a packed room filled with friendly, familiar faces. In many ways, it was the best send-off they could've hoped for – even if they didn't know it at the time.

"It was time for me to do something different," admits vocalist Brock Lindow today. "I'm burned out from touring. I love all those [36CF] guys and have nothing but wonderful memories of seeing the world together, and they're incredible people. But there's no great story beyond that. I just didn't plan on making music anymore."

Although 36 Crazyfists had reduced their touring in 2019, doing a short run in Australia earlier that year, time spent on the road was time Brock was losing with his daughter, with precious milestones missed while he was playing in different cities.

"The pandemic had a way of making you step back and reassess," Brock says. "The road was always like this fantasy world. Getting the chance to play music outside of Alaska wasn't something I thought was even possible in the early days. So to be there, 25 years later, having seen most of the world because of my band, was something that blew my mind. I'm extremely grateful for it, but I wanted to be more of a dad for my daughter."

Word of 36 Crazyfists' split broke in 2021. For a while, rumours persisted that the band would continue with a new vocalist – until December 2023, when guitarist Steve Holt posted on a Reddit thread where people were speculating about the status of the band: "At this point, nothing going on in the band now or future [...] Never say never. Fists never die!"

Either way, Brock was out. Between his co-host spot on Alaskan rock radio station KWHL's *Bob And Brock* show, and dad duties that saw him going to watch hockey with his daughter and driving her to her own games, his time was well accounted for. That is, until he received a text from Killswitch Engage guitarist Joel Stroetzel asking if he would like to contribute to a new album.

"He told me that his younger brother was putting out a record and wanted to get a bunch of his favourite singers for each song," Brock recalls. "I'd do anything for Joel, so I agreed."

Just like that, Brock was back in the game. Becoming friends with Tyler Stroetzel over the coming weeks, the pair found there was undeniable musical chemistry.

"It kind of just fell in my lap," Brock admits. "I hadn't planned for it – I've been playing with the same guys since I was 17 years old, pretty much. So doing something else wasn't something I was interested in."

Building a new band from the ground up, Tyler brought in past and present members of Diecast, a metalcore group he played guitar in from 2013 to 2021, in the form of guitarist Jon Kita and bassist Brad Horion. On drums, they recruited Ryan Manning (Pentagram, Blitzkid). After Brock flew out to Massachusetts to hang out with his new bandmates, the songs were soon flowing and Paradise Slaves was born.

"I forgot how much I need writing music in my life," Brock admits. "I've been writing journal entries and poetry as long as I can remember, but it was definitely a good time to be writing lyrics."

Bringing in producer Jim Fogarty – who's worked with the likes of Killswitch Engage, All That Remains and Shadows Fall – Paradise Slaves assembled their debut, *With Hell In His Eyes*.

"We all grew up on the same stuff," Brock explains. "The New England music, we love all of that – Killswitch, Shadows Fall, Unearth, All That Remains. But I also think there's a lot more hard rock, trying to scream less and be more melodic."

That said, given Brock has one of metalcore's most unique voices – almost the missing link between Chino Moreno and Jesse Leach – it's hardly surprising that Paradise Slaves would sound a lot like 36CF.

"There was definitely a mindset to try and not repeat myself," he

says with a chuckle. "I wanted it to be outside of the stuff I'd been doing for so long. But I can't escape me – it's gonna be me, and emotionally charged towards something that's affected my life, because I've never really written from a wordly, generalised perspective. I needed to find that fire, something that still makes sense to myself."

Among the more personal compositions on *With Hell In His Eyes* is *Dreamers*. Inspired by the difficulties he and wife Jade faced when she emigrated from her native South Africa to join him in Anchorage, *Dreamers* is a thumping, emotionally charged anthem in the vein of *Slit Wrist Theory* or *Time And Trauma*. It's also a handy reminder

that Brock has long since mastered the art of writing absolute bangers.

"The rules about not being able to leave while documents are processing meant she couldn't see her family for five years," Brock says. "Alaska and South Africa

couldn't be further apart, and I felt really bad about that, especially because her parents got sick during Covid. Thank God they were OK in the end! It was a huge hurdle for us."

Although he's got a new band and a debut album out in the world, Brock isn't falling back into old habits. Paradise Slaves' live engagements are deliberately being kept sparse, and they're cherry-picking opportunities such as sharing a bill with Killswitch Engage and Fit For An Autopsy, and playing dates with Three Days Grace and Five Finger Death Punch.

"There's a rule in the band: I'm not gonna do months-long tours," Brock says. "We'd do, like, one tour a year or even just one during a record cycle. I'm happy that way. We've all breathed a new life into each other's lives."

As for whether 36 Crazyfists are completely done-done, or just Slayer-done, Brock remains pensive.

"I've no plans," he says, before adding, "But never say never."

"I DIDN'T PLAN ON MAKING MUSIC ANYMORE"

BROCK LINDOW

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:

The second coming of metalcore's wonderful warbler

FOR FANS OF:

36 Crazyfists, Five Finger Death Punch, Killswitch Engage

LISTEN TO:

A Fever To Defeat

“

“

couldn't be further apart, and I felt really bad about that, especially because her parents got sick during Covid. Thank God they were OK in the end! It was a huge hurdle for us."

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**WITH HELL IN HIS EYES IS OUT NOW
VIA SPINEFARM**

Paradise Slaves (left to right): Brad Horion, Ryan Manning, Brock Lindow, Jon Kita, Tyler Stroetzel



UNPEOPLE

The Metallica-endorsed alt metallers smashing together misery and euphoria

WORDS: WILL MARSHALL • PICTURES: ZAK PINCHIN

LONDON RIFF-MONGERS

Unpeople are a hard band to pin down. Crushing riffs collide with gargantuan vocal hooks tailor-made for huge festival singalongs. While their name has negative connotations – the *Oxford English Dictionary* defines ‘unpeople’ as ‘a group of people regarded as politically unimportant or without rights’, and the word also echoes Orwell’s *1984*, where an ‘unperson’ is someone erased by the state – the band want to use it in an inclusive way.

“The term ‘unpeople’ was used as a political term to describe everyone but the 1%,” explains guitarist Luke Caley. “That’s all of us! We’re all busy throwing insults at each other and arguing, but we’re all in the same boat.”

IN SHORT SOUNDS LIKE:

Invasive thoughts set to a pop metal beat

FOR FANS OF:

Vukovi, Biffy Clyro, Black Peaks

LISTEN TO:

Waste

While there’s a sunniness to their melodies, their lyrics paint a darker picture, as the four-piece examine social issues and mental health. In *Waste*, vocalist Jake Crawford cries, ‘*Shoot yourself in the foot with the starting gun / good going / running a race that you know just can’t be won.*’

“It’s the juxtaposition,” drummer Richard Rayner explains. “It’s such a light tune and you can see people thinking about it.”

The aim isn’t to be bleak, but to acknowledge a shared plight.

Says Luke: “There’s a lot of, ‘Let’s all come together and be as one’, but we’re revelling in the shit of humanity.”

For all their darkness, Unpeople have certainly had plenty to celebrate.

Since forming in 2023 after the collapse of Jake and Luke’s previous band, Press To Meco, the band have had an incredible ascent through the UK’s heavy scene, including opening for Metallica in Austria last June... before they had even played a headline gig!

“Opening for Metallica was a circus situation,” Luke laughs, given the band had only just released their debut self-titled EP. “Thankfully we didn’t turn up and immediately get booed offstage. That’s our bar!”

UNPEOPLE’S SELF-TITLED EP IS OUT NOW VIA SHARP TONE. UNPEOPLE PLAY 2000 TREES FESTIVAL IN JULY





SATURDAY NIGHT SATAN

Wanna get loose with Lucifer?

WORDS: JON GARCIA • PICTURES: PETROS POULPOULOS

SATURDAY NIGHT SATAN

describe themselves plainly: "Smooth rock'n'roll for Devil worshippers."

The husband-and-wife duo from Athens aim to soundtrack a witches' dance with the mystery and panache of late-60s and early-70s occult rock bands like Blue Öyster Cult, Black Widow, and the band that launched their love of the genre, Coven.

"I want to party with the Devil, to have drinks!" vocalist Kate Soulhorn says with a smile. "It's Saturday! This is the feeling of the music."

To put listeners under their spell, Saturday Night Satan lean on Kate's haunting croon, and guitarist Jim

Kotsis's Sabbathian riffs and Thin Lizzy harmonies. They wouldn't be out of place chanting in a Black Mass with the likes of Lucifer, Green Lung or Jess And The Ancient Ones. Their 2024 debut, *All Things Black*, made waves with the hard-charging, synth-laden intro track 5AM, dance-floor belters such as *Devil In Disguise*, and the doomy, lurching *Lurking In The Shadows*. In a full-circle moment, the album earned them a spot supporting Coven on this April's Magickal Chaos Tour, which Kate describes as a "dream" and "an honour".

The band aren't interested in being depressing or demonic, and they aren't

worried about appearing heavy or evil enough. Rather, they want their music to conjure Satanic positivity in an increasingly terrible world.

"It's not possible to have positive feelings all the time," Jim says. "We feel bad about a lot of things, so the best thing to do is invest this energy into music."

"I'm not a little girl in the darkness," Kate adds. "Saturday Night Satan is a happy dance. I'm happy when I sing and when I write songs, and you can hear it from our record."

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Dancing with
witches and devils
under the pale
full moon

FOR FANS OF:
Lucifer,
Green Lung,
Thin Lizzy

LISTEN TO:
Devil In Disguise

**ALL THINGS BLACK IS OUT NOW
VIA 3P LAB**

TIBERIUS

Scottish prog metallers bring a sense of fun

WORDS: BRYAN ROLLI • PICTURE: CALUM McMILLAN

WHAT IS PROGRESSIVE

music? That's not an easy question for Scottish prog metal quintet Tiberius, but guitarist Chris Foster eventually settles on a genre-agnostic answer.

"I want to have absolutely no idea where it's going to go next," he says. "I want it to be the last thing I expect, but as soon as it happens, I want to be like, 'Yeah, that's exactly what it should have done.'"

Chris and his bandmates fulfil that criteria on Tiberius's new album, *Singing For Company*, an eight-song platter of pulverising breakdowns, fleet-fingered riffs and vocal acrobatics that combine prog metal brutality with pure pop confection. *Tip Of The Spear* and *Mosaic* boast soaring melodies that add a lightness to their

techy stomp, while *New Revelation* opens the LP with a sweeping orchestral intro that guitarist Jahan Tabrizi lovingly describes as "literal fucking clown music".

This kitchen-sink approach, along with cheeky music videos and a theatrical live show, set Tiberius apart from many of their stone-faced peers.

"When we started doing this, a lot of metal, especially in the tech and prog scene, was taking itself very seriously," Chris explains. "We were consciously trying to push against that a little bit, and have the catchier, more pop-inspired choruses, and have some sort of flippant, tongue-in-cheek lyrics."

Singing For Company is a logical successor to Tiberius's 2020 debut album, *A Peaceful Annihilation*, with

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:

Melodic prog metal with a smart mouth and a light step

FOR FANS OF:

Protest the Hero, Alter Bridge, Between The Buried And Me

LISTEN TO:

Mosaic

a greater emphasis on hooks

– something they realised they needed while they were on a tour delayed by the pandemic. When they play Radar Festival for the third time in July, they'll be hitting Manchester with their new monstrous, crowd-pleasing anthems.

There might be some validity to lead singer Grant Barclay's theory:

"I always say that we're a pop band masquerading as a metal band," he quips.

Jahan grins. "Don't tell Metal Hammer that!"

SINGING FOR COMPANY IS OUT NOW. TIBERIUS PLAY RADAR FESTIVAL IN JULY AND BLOODSTOCK IN AUGUST





OVERSIZE

The Salisbury heavygazers taking a fresh look at 90s nostalgia

WORDS: OWEN MORAWITZ • PICTURES: HARRY STEEL

RESTING ON NOSTALGIA can often feel like an easy creative gimmick. Not so for English rockers Oversize.

"I don't think we ever really sat down and went like, 'We want to sound like X, Y, Z,'" says vocalist Sam McCauley. "We always knew we were a guitar band, and it just went from there."

On *Vital Signs*, the group's debut full-length, there's no doubt that 'the power of the riff' is a driving force. Tracks such as *Fall Apart* and *Vacant* overflow with the kind of fuzzy, dynamic heft of Hum and the melodic bliss of The Smashing Pumpkins.

"We definitely don't get bummed out when people compare us to those bands," explains guitarist Lewis Lennane-Ermm. "Because we *do* listen to those bands a lot. The 90s alt scene was still guitar music, but it was incredibly earnest, heavy and interesting, especially when you look at those more fringy bands like Helmet, Quicksand, and Snapcase."

IN SHORT

SOUNDS LIKE:
Loud, proud and fuzzed-out bliss

FOR FANS OF:

Hum, Quicksand, The Smashing Pumpkins

LISTEN TO:

Vacant

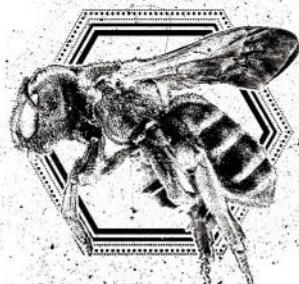
Every now and then, someone will pop up in the media and say that rock music is dead. But Oversize understand that it's timeless. They aim to write songs that will appeal to people now and in the future, and they won't be chasing any trends.

"I can really appreciate a well-written song regardless of genre," Lewis says. "I really like pop music, and I love songwriting, but [some modern acts] were missing that authenticity for me.

That sort of idea plays a huge part in our band. We don't want to just write hits that trend on TikTok. I would love for somebody in 10 or 20 years to stumble upon *Vital Signs* and still feel like it's fresh and relevant. Writing a record is about creating something that stands the test of time.

To me, that's the highest compliment that you could ever have." **H**

**VITAL SIGNS IS OUT NOW VIA SHARPTONE.
OVERSIZE PLAY 2000 TREES IN JULY**



HOARD ALMIGHTY

Box sets, underground oddities and all the essential merch you need this month



DREAM THEATER VOL. II BOX SET

WARNER MUSIC GROUP / RHINO

£244.90

HOW MUCH PROG can you take? If you already have the first instalment of this wonderfully epic collection, then we're going to presume the answer is "a lot, actually", which is just as well, since volume two is another hefty venture. This set charts the band's bold steps into the new millennium, kicking off with 2002's epic *Six Degrees Of Inner Turbulence* before running through *Train Of Thought*, *Octavarium* and *Systematic Chaos*. While the price tag might seem a trifle (ahem) steep, it's worth bearing in mind that most of these have been out-of-print on vinyl for almost a decade, with collector prices soaring like a particularly audacious John Petrucci guitar solo. With just 2,500 of these floating around, we're sure it won't be long before *Vol. II* becomes similarly unobtainable.

tinyurl.com/dream2-boxset



BLOODYWOOD BUNDLE

£32.99

One of Hammer's The New Heavy 2025 stars, Bloodywood are rampaging across the world with their awesome *Nu Delhi* album like vibrant deities, which makes this exclusive Ganesha t-shirt and special cover bundle very apt.

tinyurl.com/bloody-bundle



GAAHLS WYRD T-SHIRT

£19

Gaahl's new album, *Braiding The Stories*, is another lurch into the widescreen realms of the subconscious. Wear this moody runic tee to bed, eat some cheese before you drop off, and who knows what your visions may portend?

tinyurl.com/wyrd-tee



GHOST SOFT TOY

£37.99

Papa Emeritus IV may be offstage doing random, lore-related admin (no idea, mate), but that doesn't mean he's gone. Squeeze him, arrange him in an aesthetically pleasing plushy situation, give him to your dog – whatever.

tinyurl.com/soft-papa



FREAK ON A LEASH DOG COLLAR

£33.45

Kit out your beloved pooch like it's staggering home from an S&M party, courtesy of Korn's Jonathan Davis and designer-to-the-stars Ashton Michael. Pedigree Chum-flavoured ballgag sold separately (not).

tinyurl.com/freak-leash



LAVA DECAL

£15.79

Invite nan round and trick her into thinking she's been banished to the fiery pits of hell with these convincing 3D floor stickers. Dress up as the goat-headed fiend from Slayer's *Show No Mercy* to complete the illusion.

tinyurl.com/lava-decal



NOISY MAY DRESS

£47.99

Wanna rock a goth look and still survive the ungodly British summer (all two weeks of it anyway)? If so, then this lacy maxi dress will see you right: it looks the part while keeping you as cool as a corpse on ice.

tinyurl.com/lacey-dress



SLEEP TOKEN T-SHIRT

£22.99 – £24.99

The iconography for Sleep Token's chart-busting *Even In Arcadia* puts Faith No More's floral arrangements to shame. If you'd rather just merrily sling another black t-shirt onto your black t-shirt pile, they're doing that, too.

tinyurl.com/arcadia-tee



METALLICA BASKETBALL JERSEY

£41.99 – £44.99

Rush other players with the efficiency of a murder hornet who's just heard about Napster. With a design based on the Grammy-winning *72 Seasons*, this jersey's breathable mesh will keep you feeling cool and looking cooler.

tinyurl.com/seasons-top



DUMPSTER FIRE DIFFUSER

£37.30

Sick of the daily grind? Can't bear to read the news? Just heard Six Feet Under's *Graveyard Classics*? Absolute dumpster fire. Embrace the chaos with this 3D-printed, tabletop-friendly diffuser, ready to siphon your favourite scents.

tinyurl.com/dumpster-diffuser



VOLBEAT BUNDLE

£32.99

Volbeat may be the people's band, but you can belong to an exclusive, well-read and stylish club by getting hold of this one-off bundle, featuring a life-spanning interview with Michael Poulsen, plus exclusive tee and cover.

tinyurl.com/volbeat-bundle

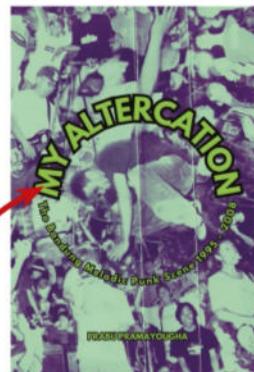


HALESTORM T-SHIRT

£35

Now bona fide arena-botherers, Halestorm are back with a sixth album: *Everest*. It's nothing to do with outdoor clothing, the 2015 film, or Brian Blessed – that we know of, anyway. Comfortably ponder in this t-shirt.

tinyurl.com/everest-tee



BANDUNG PUNK BOOK

£14.99

My Altercation details the little-known story of the Bandung melodic punk scene. Packed with rare photos, interviews and dewy-eyed Green Day nostalgia, you'll get a proper schooling on one of Indonesia's best-kept secrets.

tinyurl.com/bandung-punk

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“IT WAS US AGAINST THE WORLD”

On July 5, Black Sabbath and Ozzy Osbourne will play live for the last time ever. The four members look back on an incredible journey

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY



It's not only near where we first played together, but my house is less than half a mile from Villa Park. I can't believe that in 2025, my last gig ever would be taking place there."

Ozzy Osbourne is thinking about the past, the present and the future, and they all come down to a single postcode area just north of Birmingham city centre.

It was there, in a cramped terraced house on Lodge Road, B6, that the young John Michael Osbourne spent his childhood and formative years. It was there in B6, too, at the now-vanished Newtown Community Centre, that his band Black Sabbath wrote the song that bore their name, summoning a brand new sound from the dark depths of their young and fevered minds, birthing an entire genre in the process. And it's in B6 that Ozzy will make what he promises will be his last ever live appearance, on July 5, 2025 at Villa Park, home of Aston Villa FC.

This one-day show is set to be the greatest metal gig of the century, probably ever ever. The stacked bill sees pretty much every major metal band from the last 50 years lining up to pay tribute: Metallica, Guns N' Roses, Tool, Slayer, Gojira, Mastodon, Lamb Of God, Anthrax, members of Ghost, Limp Bizkit, Sleep Token, Halestorm... the list goes on.

And then there's Black Sabbath themselves. This may be Ozzy's farewell show, but it's Sabbath's too. Fifty-seven years after they first played together, and almost 20 years since they last shared a stage, the four original members – Ozzy plus guitarist Tony Iommi, bassist Geezer Butler and drummer Bill Ward – will close the show with their own set within a stone's throw of where they grew up and formed the legendary band.

"I'm absolutely amazed at the amount of bands that have come forwards to support us," says Tony Iommi, sounding genuinely humbled. "It's a great honour."

If Tony Iommi had written the opening riff of the song *Black Sabbath* and then gone back to working a regular job, his immortality would still be assured. Bands had heaved up rock before them, but this was something different. An amalgam of sonic power, supernatural horror and the sound of late-60s working-class Birmingham, the song was heavy metal's Big Bang moment.

"It really did feel like we'd come up with something special," the 77-year-old guitarist tells *Hammer*. "It really was a shock to people when we started playing it live. They either loved it or didn't know what to make of it."

Sabbath's self-titled debut album, released on Friday February 13, 1970, went Top 10 in the UK. The follow-up, *Paranoid*, reached No.1 later the same year. Sabbath were The People's Band. Sniffy critics hated them, which Tony admits hurt.

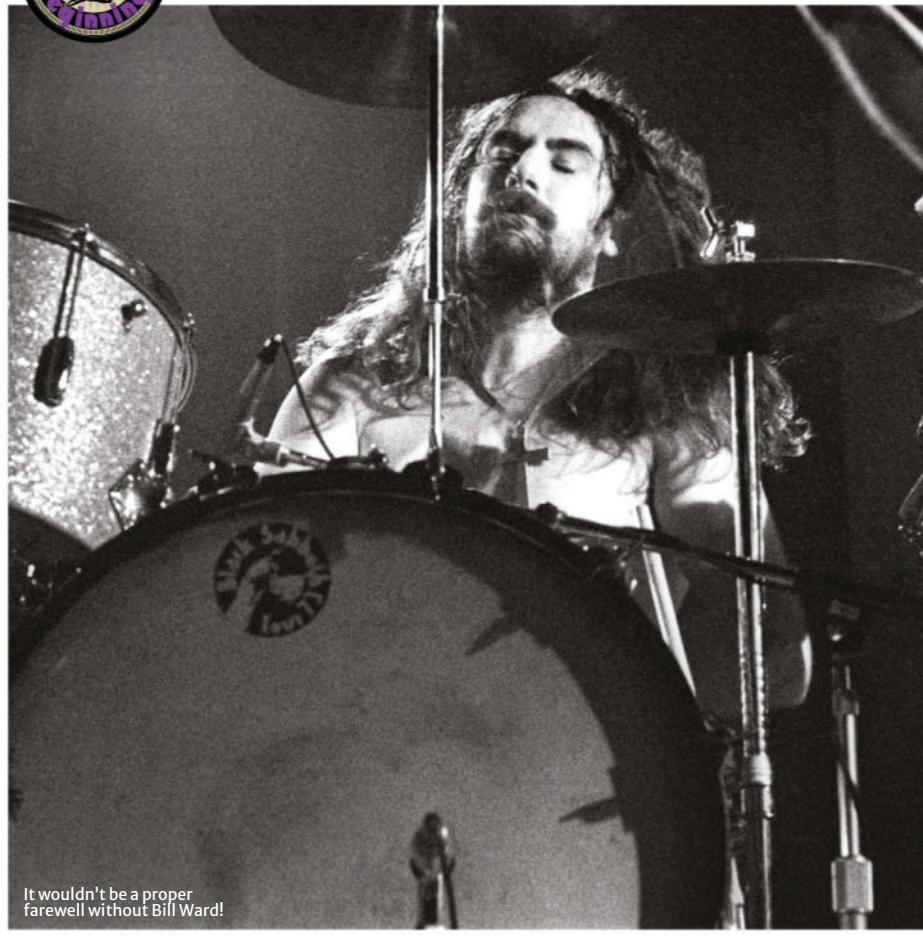
"Nobody likes being slagged off for what you do," says Tony. "But we believed in what we were doing. We loved it."

What followed was a wild, decade-long rollercoaster ride that these four kids from Aston could never have envisaged.

"We were like brothers," says Tony. "It was the four of us against the world."

But a combination of a relentless work rate (eight albums in as many years, the first six stone-cold classics), bad management and increasingly wayward lifestyles ground them down, and Ozzy was fired in 1979. The singer went on to a stellar solo career, while Tony continued to lead Sabbath with a changing cast of musicians.

The bond between the four of them may have been strained at times, but it never broke. There were several reunions over the years, and even an album, 2013's *Underrated* (although Bill Ward was absent from the



latter due to a contractual dispute). Still, Tony admits that he wasn't sure about the idea for the Back To The Beginning show when it was first floated. In his head, Black Sabbath's The End tour, which wrapped up with a hometown farewell show back in February 2017, was the final full-stop for this iconic band.

"I wasn't really thinking we'd do another show," he says. "I didn't want to do the thing where you say, 'Here we are, we're packing up now... and, oh, we're back again!' I didn't want to do that."

Two things changed his mind. Firstly, the charity aspect – all profits from the gig are going to Cure Parkinson's, Birmingham Children's Hospital and Acorns Children's Hospice. Secondly, the prospect of the original line-up reuniting for the first time in almost 20 years, any differences put aside once and for all.

"There'd be no point doing it without Bill," he says. "But because this is the original line-up, it makes it more proper. I'm sure it's going to be emotional."

Geezer Butler can remember the first time the band played *Black Sabbath* in public. It was at a pub called The Pokey Hole in Lichfield on August 1, 1969.

"We played it at the end of our usual blues set, and nobody expected what was to come," he says. "The crowd went crazy."

Geezer had never played bass before Black Sabbath. He'd been a rhythm guitarist in a series of local Birmingham bands, including one, The Rare Breed, with Ozzy.

"I hadn't enough money for a bass guitar, so I tuned down all the strings on my Telecaster [guitar] for our first rehearsal," he says.

He was a quick learner. Geezer's rolling, rumbling bass was as integral to Sabbath's success as anything, and so



Sabbs' 10th anniversary warranted cakes. Their farewell warrants the biggest metal show ever!



were his lyrics. It's hard not to see how the depression that has plagued the bassist shaped a song such as *Paranoid*: '*Happiness I cannot feel / And love to me is so unreal*.' But for the bassist and his bandmates, being in Black Sabbath was a chance to step away from the rigours of real life.

"The best thing about it was not having to go to work, which I absolutely hated," says Geezer. "I was born to be in a band, and making a living from what I loved doing was all I could ask for from life."

Not everybody bought into what they were doing. They were turned down by every record company who heard them, before eventually signing to Vertigo.

"The success of the first album, after all the negative reaction from the music press, record companies – we were turned down by six record companies – and even some family members, was the greatest feeling of all," recalls Geezer.

"WHAT PREPARATION? THIS IS WHAT I DO!"

OZZY OSBOURNE

He stuck with Sabbath after Ozzy left in 1979, but he followed the singer out of the door in 1984 (Bill Ward had left four years earlier). Even then, he returned to play with both the Iommi-led Sabbath and in Ozzy's solo band, a bridge between these two sometimes warring parties.

"It's a very strange bond between us all," he says. "In spite of the fallings-out and not talking to each other over the years, we still look out for each other. When we get together, it's like we just saw each other yesterday."

Like Tony, he thought The End tour was just that – the band's swansong.

"But I was asked if Sabbath would ever tour again back in the 1990s, and I said never again," he says. "So much for that!"

Geezer doesn't use the telephone, so he heard about the Villa Park gig via a text in the autumn of 2024. It was Ozzy, asking if he'd be interested in doing one more gig. Yes, he replied, if the others were up for it.



"I wouldn't have contemplated it without Bill," he says. "The whole point of this last show was to finish with the original four of us playing together."

For the bassist, Sabbath's legacy goes beyond the music they made. It's the fact that these four working-class kids from Birmingham with little hope and no future dug deep in themselves and found not just a brand new sound, but a shared belief – one that allowed them to defy the odds.

"The fans saw what the so-called critics couldn't, or wouldn't," he says. "And that's why after 57 years we're still banging out the songs."

Black Sabbath was the best thing that ever happened to me," says Bill Ward today. "My life would have been terrible otherwise. I was a lost kid in my teenage years. All I could identify with was drums and rock'n'roll."

Like the other members of the band, the drummer grew up within sight of Villa Park. As a kid, he would offer to watch the cars of football fans attending games for money. Anyone who refused might find a knife stuck in their tyres.

"It was basically extortion," he says with a laugh.

The man speaking from his home in Southern California today is softly spoken and thoughtful, at odds with both a reputation as a wildman to match Ozzy Osbourne (tales abound of the young Bill Ward drunkenly climbing lampposts and allowing his bandmates to set his beard on fire), and the jazz-inspired drumming style that gave the band's megalithic sound its swing. Softly spoken or not, he's Sabbath's biggest cheerleader.

"THE FANS SAW WHAT THE CRITICS COULDN'T"

GEEZER BUTLER

"I knew we were good from the first time we played with each other," he says. "I had this feeling inside that we could do something bold and strange, and could do a lot of damage and change things and propel us into a different dimension. And we did."

Where his bandmates prevaricate when it comes to naming their favourite Black Sabbath albums, Bill has no such problem.

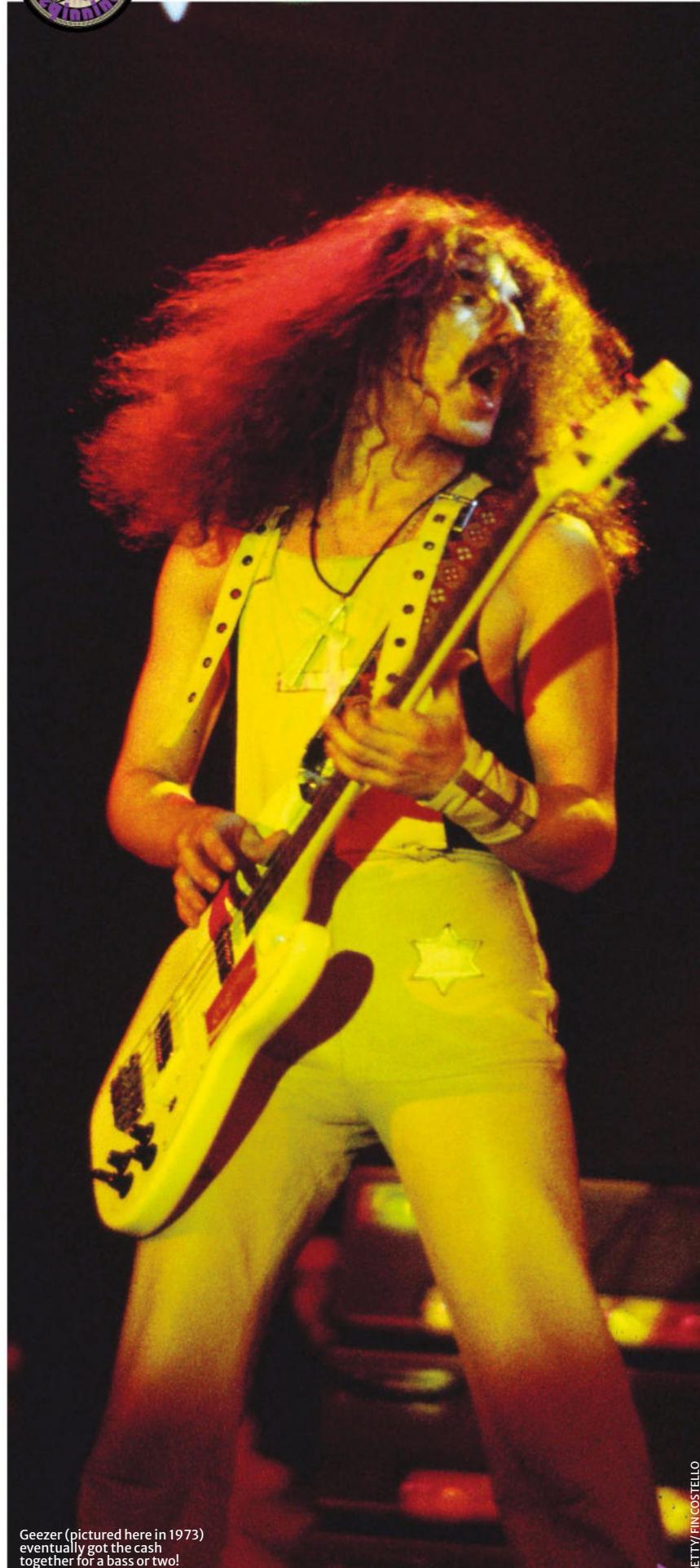
"*Master Of Reality*," he says, referring to their classic third album, released in 1971. "You can hear us growing on that record, but it still contains the anger and fearlessness we had in the early days."

The unity of the band during their 70s heyday was immense, he says, even when the demands of success and all the attendant nonsense that comes with it kicked in.

"We stuck together. We cared for each other. We had each others' backs. If one of us was wounded, we took care of them."

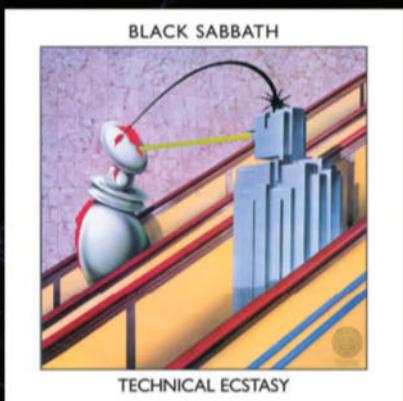
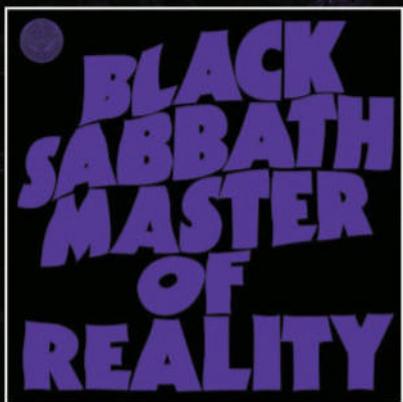
That unity looked shaky at the start of the last decade. Bill had been part of previous reunions, most notably in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and when the original line-up announced in 2011 that they were getting back together to make a new studio album, he was part of it. Then a few months later he wasn't, citing "unsignable contracts". The tour and the subsequent 13 album proceeded without him.

"It was a difficult period for me," he says. "I went inwards. I actually became ill."



Geezer (pictured here in 1973) eventually got the cash together for a bass or two!

BLACK SABBATH





The riff master himself,
Tony Iommi in 1976

The two sides gradually patched things up over the next decade, and today, the Villa Park show is a big deal for Bill. He doesn't say as much, but it seems like he has a point to prove to those people who doubt he can pull it off. He's been in training for it for weeks, building up to what will be a physically demanding performance for a man in his late 70s.

"I played for two hours yesterday, very loud," he says. "I'm doing sparring, boxing – that keeps my upper body fit."

But there's another reason this show is important to him. It all comes back to what they've been through together. "They're still my brothers," he says simply. "They'll always be my brothers. It doesn't matter how much we argue, I grew up with them, I love them."

As iconic as Black Sabbath are, the Back To The Beginning show is Ozzy's farewell first and foremost. In 2023, the singer cancelled his upcoming European and US tour – itself twice postponed due to Covid – and announced that he was retiring from touring due to ongoing health issues, including

Parkinson's (he was diagnosed with the incurable condition in 2019) and a combination of spinal injuries, pneumonia and infections.

"Ozzy kept saying that his one big regret was that he didn't get to say thank you and goodbye to his fans," Sharon Osbourne tells *Hammer*. "He just felt terrible about it. I was thinking, 'How can we do that?'"

Ozzy has said that his wife partly came up with the idea of the gig as "something to give me a reason to get up in the morning". He's only half-joking. In 2019, he suffered a fall at home that necessitated surgery, otherwise he may have been left paralysed. The last few years have been physically and mentally debilitating. He recently told *The Guardian* newspaper that he had trouble walking, and suffered from blood pressure issues related to blood clots in his legs.

It sounds bleak, but this is Ozzy we're talking about. If he's not actually one of rock'n'roll's great immortals, he's the closest we've got. Speaking to *Hammer* via email, he sounds bullish about his preparations for the show.

"FOR ME, IT'S ALL OVER WITH SABBATH"

TONY IOMMI



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Ozzy Osbourne will be bowing out with a bang!

"I'm looking forward to being back onstage," he says. "What preparation? It's what I do."

While Sabbath undeniably changed the course of music, so did Ozzy himself. He's consistently used his stardom with both Sabbath and as a solo artist to offer a hand up to successive generations of bands. He took Metallica out on the road in 1986, shortly after the release of *Master Of Puppets*, helping legitimise them in the eyes of more suspicious mainstream metal fans. A decade later, Ozzfest became a hothouse for countless new metal bands, from Slipknot to Disturbed. Even beyond musical inspiration, many of the bands on the Back To The Beginning bill owe Ozzy and Sharon a debt of gratitude for the career they currently have, and they're eager to be part of the send-off.

Says Ozzy: "I am very blessed to say my goodbyes with the help of so many amazing musicians and friends."

And the future? He says he's not stopping recording.

"I still enjoy doing my own work," he says. "I also enjoy singing on other people's work. For the foreseeable future I will keep on recording, if the projects interest me."

But this gig will be the end of the road for Ozzy Osbourne as a live performer. And the fact that he'll be taking his final bow with the three men he started all this with, almost 60 years ago, adds a jolt of emotion to the occasion.

"It's very important," he says. "From the late 60s, we are probably one of the only bands where the original members are still alive and speaking with one another. As my wife says, it's an invisible bond that can't be broken."

"IT'S AN INVISIBLE BOND THAT CAN'T BE BROKEN"

— OZZY OSBOURNE

By the time you read this, the four members of Black Sabbath will have begun rehearsals for the Back To The Beginning show. None of them can say what they'll play, as they haven't decided, though emails and texts have been flying between them with suggestions.

"I'm in touch with Ozzy now more than I ever have been," says Tony. "We were just texting the other day about what we're going to do on the day."

There's one thing that is assured. This really will be the end of the road for Sabbath, and for Ozzy. There have been retirement tours and farewell shows for both, but this is the final curtain.

"The original Sabbath will never be onstage together again," says Ozzy.

"For me, it's all over with Sabbath," says Tony Iommi. "We'll do this and then that's it. How long can you go on?"

"I seriously think this is the actual end, unless someone digs us up or finds our DNA in the future and recreates us," says Geezer Butler.

With respect to the scientists of the 25th century, that's unlikely to happen. On July 5, at Villa Park, the first and greatest heavy metal band of them all will play their last ever show, take their final bows, and exit the streets where they grew up one last time.

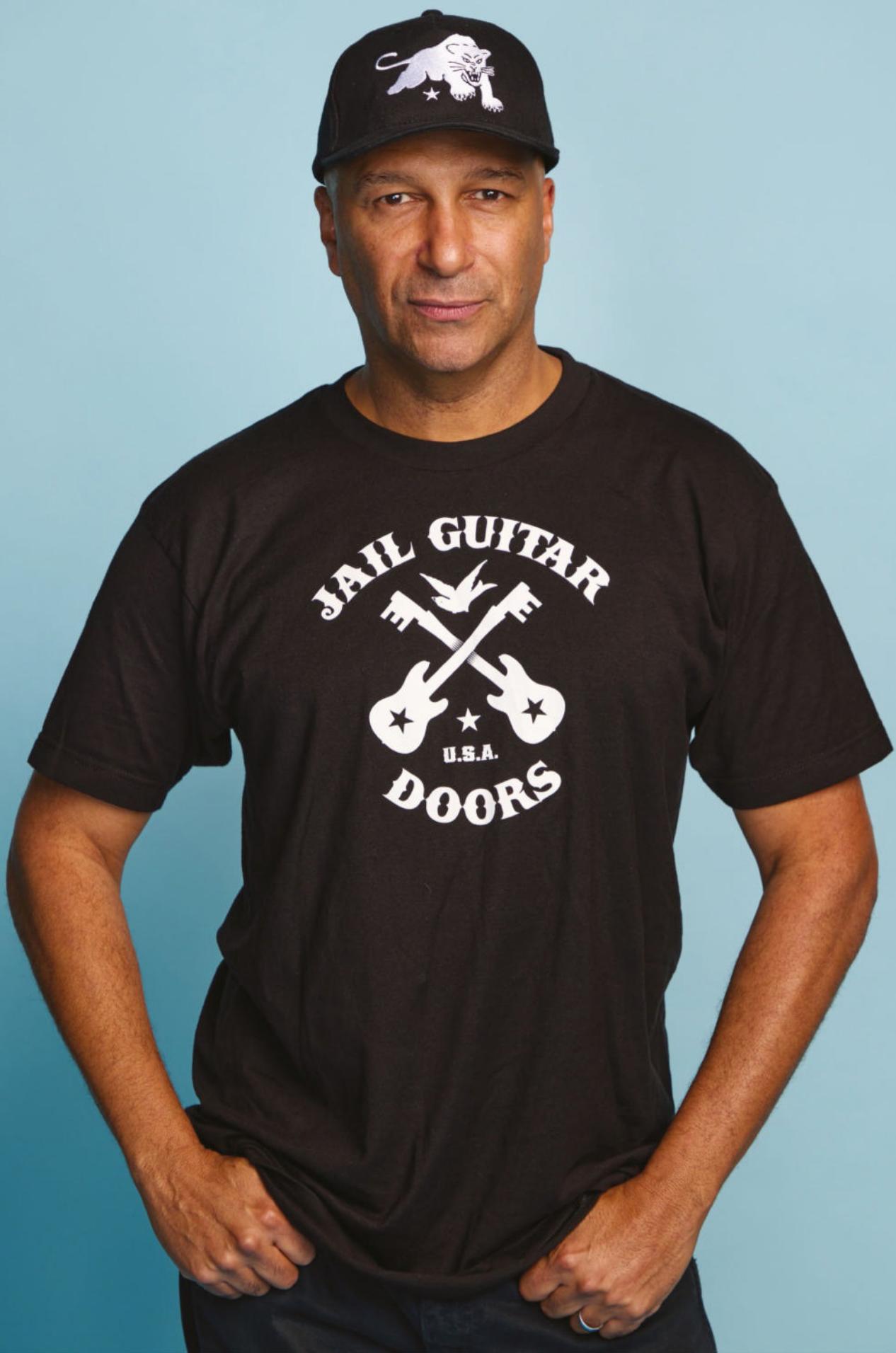
"How do I want us to be remembered? For what we brought to the table," says Tony Iommi. "For bringing this music out and inspiring other bands to build on it."

THE BACK TO THE BEGINNING SHOW TAKES PLACE AT VILLA PARK ON JULY 5



Geezer, Bill, Ozzy and Tony:
metal owes them everything







IRON MAN

How Tom Morello pulled together the bill for the “greatest day in heavy metal history”

Tom Morello was around 10 or 11 years old when Black Sabbath first entered his life, and the memory is still seared into his brain. “Somebody brought the *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* record into school,” he says, “and I remember being physically frightened by it. I was very much afraid of the name and of the artwork: ‘What could that possibly be? And what danger does it pose to me and my family?’”

God knows what that terrified pre-teen would have made of how things have turned out. Fifty years on, the Rage Against The Machine guitarist has been appointed musical director of the gig of the century, Ozzy Osbourne and Black Sabbath’s Back To The Beginning farewell show.

“It’s an honour to be doing this,” he says. “Sabbath are one of the greatest bands of all time. They founded one of the most important genres in history. The goal is a very simple one, and that is to create the greatest day in the history of heavy metal as a salute to the band that started it all.”

Tom was tasked by Sharon Osbourne to put together a bill that reflected the enduring influence and bottomless love for Ozzy and Sabbath. He threw himself into the job, hitting his contacts book hard and personally putting in the calls to the musicians he knew, to ask if they wanted to appear. On paper, it looks like a logistical headache.

“A headache? It was a dream, dude!” he enthuses. “When you say, ‘Black Sabbath are playing one final show with all four original members, it’s also the *final* ever show, and we’d like you to play on that date’, people pick up the fucking phone.”

“Here’s the funny thing,” he continues. “After we announced the bill, it was my phone ringing. People were like, ‘Heeyyyy...’ They weren’t asking for tickets, but saying, ‘Can I play?’”

His musical relationship with Sabbath goes back decades. It took him a minute to get over his initial youthful terror, but once he was in, he was in.

“I bought the *Paranoid* record when I probably was 12 or 13, and fell in love with the band from the first note. I haven’t looked back since.”

His friendship with Ozzy clearly doesn’t stretch back quite so far, but he has known the singer since the 1990s.

“I’ve met Ozzy in a number of different phases of his career,” says Tom. “He’s an apex performer when he’s on his game. One of my favourite concerts that I’ve ever been a part of was some benefit show in LA, and Ozzy headlined it. He rocked this fucking room so fucking hard that I couldn’t believe it. He wasn’t necessarily a young man, but he had all that visceral power of his youth. Offstage, they’re all the loveliest people on the planet, but they can very much tap into what Black Sabbath is about. And we’ll certainly be getting that in spades when they play.”

He likens the upcoming gig to the Freddie Mercury Tribute Concert in 1992, in which A-list bands gathered to pay tribute to the late Queen singer, or more recently the two transatlantic shows that honoured Foo Fighters drummer

Taylor Hawkins following his death in March, 2022.

“But guess what? They weren’t alive to be there to play and to enjoy it,” he says. “Black Sabbath’s gonna be there, dude. To be in their backyard, with a line-up of the biggest acts in metal paying tribute to them, has got to be pretty special.”

He’s tight-lipped on exactly who will be playing what, but he does offer a warning.

“I will say this – for anyone lucky enough to be going to the show, don’t be late. This is not one of those shows where the bands are playing in ascending order and you can show up at 5pm. We have surprise guests that you won’t believe. Trust me – don’t be late.”

On July 5, the men who put the fear of the Devil into the young Tom Morello all those years ago will finally be saying their farewell. They may be riding into the sunset, but their legacy remains immeasurable.

“Their DNA is everywhere, not just in metal,” he says. “I’ve talked to [Public Enemy rapper] Chuck D about them, the Run DMC guys – the founders of hip hop were influenced by Black Sabbath and Ozzy Osbourne. Same with the world of EDM. Without them, literally nothing would be the same.”

**“A HEADACHE?
IT WAS A
DREAM, DUDE!”**



“SABBATH THE FLOCK THEY



WORDS: STEPHEN HILL

“ARE TENDING OF BANDS CREATED”

In this exclusive roundtable interview, Sabbath superfans Lzzy Hale, Joe Duplantier, Brann Dailor and Randy Blythe bow down before the godfathers of metal



lack Sabbath's influence is pretty much impossible to measure, but the army of A-list names who'll be descending on Villa Park on July 5 gives a pretty good indication of just how many bands and artists they've inspired.

Unsurprisingly, four of the musicians appearing at the Back To The Beginning show jumped at the chance to take part in *Metal Hammer*'s all-star roundtable interview, to discuss the impact Ozzy and Sabbath have had on them specifically and the world generally.

Each of these figureheads of modern metal – that's Lamb Of God's Randy Blythe, Halestorm's Lzzy Hale, Gojira's Joe Duplantier and Mastodon's Brann Dailor – has their own experience of the godfathers of metal, both personally and musically. And as they gather to chat on Zoom, with *Hammer* acting as MC, it becomes clear that none of them would be here without Ozzy Osbourne or Black Sabbath.

"We have so little time onstage at the gig, we won't be able to express how much this means," says Joe Duplantier of Back To The Beginning, speaking for everyone. "Which is why we're doing this."

When did each of you first discover Black Sabbath?

Randy Blythe: "Probably in the sixth grade. My little brother got a copy of the *Paranoid* tape. I'd probably heard *Iron Man* on the radio before that, but it was the *Paranoid* album. We used to listen to it at night – that made sense, as it had that evil 'Devil's note'. Their music is just so low and heavy."

Lzzy Hale: "I was probably about 11. This was, like, 1996 and my friends were listening to Backstreet Boys, Boyz II Men, Mariah Carey and all of that. My dad introduced me to [Dio-fronted Sabbath albums] *Heaven And Hell* and *Mob Rules*, which was my introduction to Black Sabbath. Then we went to *Master Of Reality* and *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*, with A National Acrobat on it – that's one of my favourite songs. In fact, the first riff I ever learned on guitar, I'm pretty sure was *Heaven And Hell*."

Brann Dailor: "I can't remember my life without Black Sabbath. My parents were both hippies, but they were Frank Zappa and Black Sabbath hippies, not Grateful Dead hippies. My mom was in a band when I was pretty young, from when I was about three years old until I was probably 10 or 11. They used to cover *War Pigs*, my mom would put this skull mask on, come out with this sword, with this white Satanic robe and she would swing around this sword. I thought my mom wrote *War Pigs* back then. We had a pretty steady diet of early Black Sabbath."

Joe Duplantier: "It's super-cool to hear that you guys had parents that put you up to Black Sabbath, and your mom singing is incredible. I'm very far from that. I grew up in France with an American mom and French dad, but they were listening to other things – Tracy Chapman and Michael Jackson and all that stuff. There was no metal around the house, I wasn't introduced properly to the godfathers of the genre, which I regret a little bit, but it's fun because I get to discover it now. I went straight from Metallica to Morbid Angel, basically."

So you're a relative Sabbath newbie, Joe?

Joe: "I guess so! When I turned 30, I started to be more open to older stuff. And I really got it, all that stuff grew in me little by little. Only then did I really discover Black Sabbath."

Lzzy: "That's interesting, because I started trying to convince my friends to listen to Sabbath, and they just looked at me like I was an alien from outer space. But I just loved it. Then I started digging into Ozzy's back catalogue. I think this was the *Ozzmosis* era [1995], so *Perry Mason* was played on the radio a lot. When we started the band a few years later, we would just devour these Sabbath and Ozzy VHS tapes. I really don't think I would be the rocker I am today without this incredible bed of music."

Joe: "Well, when I was young, I just wanted to go straight to the fast shit. Now, listening to Sabbath and covering a song for the upcoming show, I realised how Metallica was influenced by Black Sabbath. I'm like, 'Oh, that's where they got it!' It's very interesting to go backwards."

What was the first time any of you covered Sabbath songs?

Randy: "I think the first song I ever learned to play on guitar was *Iron Man*. I just picked it out, and it's about the only song I can play on guitar." **Brann:** "A few years ago, I learned every single song on the first Black Sabbath record, just to get to know Bill Ward's playing intimately, to really dissect every single little nook and cranny of

all those songs. I ended up playing with a bunch of guys in Chicago for a Halloween show, and we did the whole first Black Sabbath album."

Lzzy: "When we started and were playing in bars, we used to cover *Heaven And Hell*, and some Ozzy solo stuff too. You're almost scared to touch them, as they're so special, but it feels so powerful to play them. Also, even with a female register, Ozzy's voice is high! Those are tough songs to sing!"

What is it about Ozzy that's made him such an icon in metal?

Joe: "His attitude. Whenever I feel stressed before a show, I just think of Ozzy and chill. He's just being himself, his wonderful self, especially in his older days. I really like his attitude."

Randy: "I mean, come on, from like the rumours of him biting the head off a bat and just the wild man behaviour back in the day, all that obviously that adds to the legend. But for me, it's his voice. Ozzy sounds like Ozzy. He's not a perfect singer, but

he sounds exactly like himself, which is far more important than being some sort of polished Auto-Tuned crap. Ozzy sounds like Ozzy, man."

Brann: "I'm just a huge Ozzy fan. Anything that he's singing on, I'm down with. I don't care what it is. I love his voice, it was a huge part of my childhood, those early records, [Ozzy's 1980 solo debut album] *Blizzard Of Ozz* and [1981 follow-up] *Diary Of A Madman* are just very comforting for me. When all else fails, you have the early Ozzy solo records, as well as Black Sabbath, an endless well of inspiration. Put Ozzy on and it's soothing, you know what I mean?"

Lzzy: "All my vocal sensibilities, even if I want to or not, Ozzy is in there. Just his inflection – his word placement over the top of riffs, his vocal stylings ►

"BLACK SABBATH WERE ON THEIR OWN CRUSADE"

LZZY HALE

MY FAVOURITE SABBATH SONG

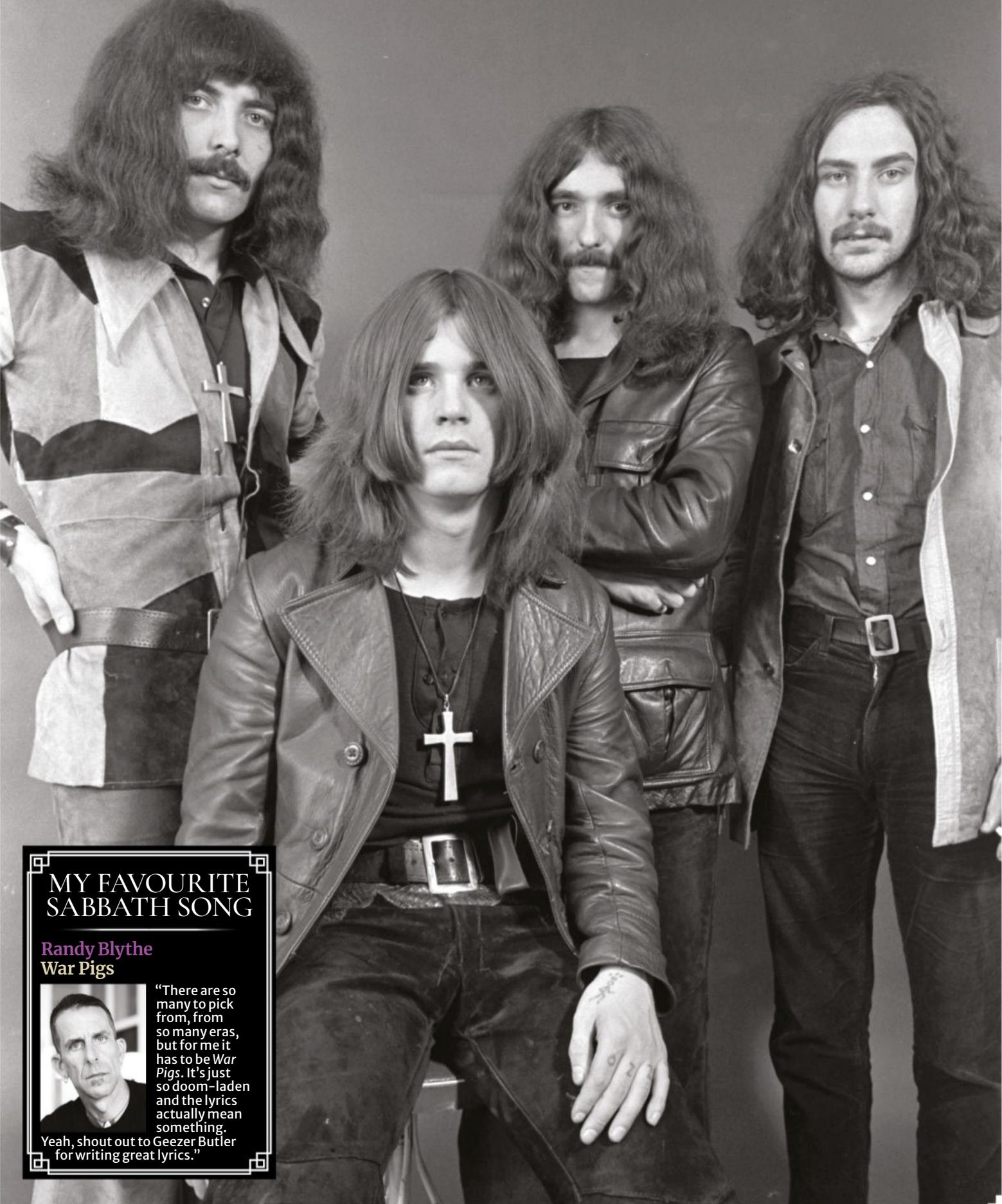
Lzzy Hale
Electric Funeral



"It doesn't really matter, because they are all amazing! But I'm going with *Electric Funeral* – it's just so tragic. As soon as that riff comes in, I'm like, 'Ohhh, I don't know what's going to happen here!' You get that, like, itchy feeling."



Living legends: Tony Iommi, Ozzy Osbourne, Geezer Butler and Bill Ward in 1970



MY FAVOURITE SABBATH SONG

Randy Blythe
War Pigs



"There are so many to pick from, from so many eras, but for me it has to be *War Pigs*. It's just so doom-laden and the lyrics actually mean something."

Yeah, shout out to Geezer Butler for writing great lyrics."



Bill, Ozzy, Geezer and Tony at West Hollywood's Whisky a Go Go in 2011

and sensibilities, are so burned into my subconscious that I can't escape it. It's just my go-to."

Randy: "When you hear a Black Sabbath song or an Ozzy song and you hear his voice, you immediately know who he is. And that's something that as a vocalist, that's what you're going for. You know, singularity of character, and Ozzy certainly has that."

Sabbath played a huge part in shaping the aesthetics of metal as well...

Brann: "For sure. I'd just be staring at the album covers of *Paranoid*, *Sabotage*, the first one with the haunting woman on the front. I mean, just hours and hours of staring at those album covers, just kind of imagining what those guys are like or what they're doing. They obviously live in some crazy castle somewhere and dress in suits of armour!"

Lzzy: "I remember those days!"

Joe: "Yeah, their look; dressed in black with the cross and the long hair. There's something incredibly vampire-esque and classy about how they present themselves."

Have any of you met Ozzy or the rest of Sabbath before?

Lzzy: "No, not Ozzy. But I have met the other boys in Sabbath in 2009 when we got to open for [late 2000s Dio-fronted incarnation] Heaven & Hell. We did the House Of Blues, and I was incredibly nervous, because we did our set and there was Geezer and Tony hanging out on the House Of Blues balcony. I'm like, 'Don't mess up!' Afterward, they stopped their entire post-show meet and greet to say hello, and we hung out until two in the morning."

They walked us out to our buses, and it just felt like they were our uncles. It was really strange how kind, wonderful and encouraging they were to us as such a young band."

Randy: "We were lucky enough to tour with Heaven & Hell in the UK. We hung out with Dio. Dio got us very drunk and told us crazy Black Sabbath stories. That was awesome. But I hadn't seen Iommi at all. On the last day of the tour, someone came into our dressing room, I think it was Tony Iommi's assistant. He said, 'Mr Iommi would like to see you guys.' It was very formal. We went to his dressing room, and it's like, 'Mr Blythe, here you go.' And Tony was there. He said, 'Very nice to meet you.' Very formal. Very, very gentlemanly. Super-nice guy, though."

Brann: "I remember when we did the Ozzfest in 2005, which was Iron Maiden and the original Black Sabbath, and I had the black and white polka dot drumkit with the picture of Randy Rhoads on the kickdrum. I guess the word got out, and one day this golf kart turns up at our stage and it's Ozzy, Sharon and Zakk [Wylde]. I was pretty starstruck, pretty nervous to meet Ozzy. I mean, my whole life, putting this guy up on a pedestal and he wants to come over and see my drums."

Joe: "That's so cool."

Randy: "We toured with the original line-up of Black Sabbath on Ozzfest in 2004. It was a really big year for us. I had the pleasure of hanging out with Ozzy backstage, and yeah, super-nice guy."

They're famously very encouraging to younger bands, aren't they?

Lzzy: "They do feel like the elder statesmen, there's a warmth about their personalities."

"THEY GAVE ME A JOB BY CREATING HEAVY METAL!"

RANDY BLYTHE

MY FAVOURITE SABBATH SONG

Brann Dailor
Children Of The Grave

"That's an impossible question! But if I have to answer with just one, then I'll say *Children Of The Grave*. That song created the heavy metal shuffle, the 6/8! Since that's a place where I mostly live, I'll say that. Love the 6/8, love the heavy metal shuffle, love that song."



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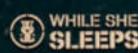


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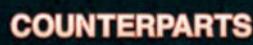
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Tony and Sharon are gearing up for Back To The Beginning!

It's almost like they're tending their flock of heavy metal bands that they created."

Brann: "On the same Ozzfest, there was a knock at the bus door. I answered the door and it was this big security guard guy. He was like, 'Is Brann Dailor on here?' And I was like, 'What the fuck did I do?' He says, 'Bill Ward wants to see you in his trailer.' I'm like, 'Oh no, did I say something?' I don't even remember! I went over there with them, went in Bill's trailer, and he just wanted to meet me and hang out and give me some sticks and a signed picture of himself, and talk about drums for a little while. That was pretty amazing."

How does it feel to be playing Ozzy and Sabbath's last-ever show?

Brann: "We got an email about it, and our management said, 'That's the fastest response we got from all the members in the history of sending emails to Mastodon!'"

Randy: "Of course, it's a huge honour. We're giving a proper send-off to the tree, the root from which all of us sprang."

Lzzy: "Think about how many bands would not exist if it was not for Black Sabbath. These men literally invented the genre and held their ground and talked about whatever the fuck they wanted to talk about. It's just incredible to be asked to be a part of it, and to be able to be there celebrating their work, celebrating their life and being there to say goodbye. To say thank you so much for everything that they have given us."

Joe: "I feel like that show, everybody will know; the audience, all the bands, everybody

present will know how special this is, right? We don't have to explain. It's fucking Black Sabbath saying goodbye."

What legacy will Ozzy and Sabbath leave behind after the final show?

Joe: "Sabbath are one of these bands where the stars aligned somehow – the melodies, the energy, and Ozzy's statements about being free, 'I'm being myself! Fuck you all!' So many other bands then repeated that message. In the 60s or 70s, there was a cultural revolution, and Sabbath were an incarnation of that spirit of the younger generations breaking the boundaries of society."

Brann: "You have to remember they weren't inspired by metal, because there were no metal bands for them to be influenced by. That blows my mind. The imagination and creativity it took to create all of this from nothing is remarkable. That three-note Devil's chord you hear opening the first song on their first album sets the tone for the whole genre. Just look at the reach of it. How could they ever have imagined it would create so much?"

Lzzy: "In a world where everyone is striving for perfection, everyone's striving to be liked, everyone is trying so hard to be hard, it felt like they were on their own crusade and they didn't care who was going to jump on their train or not. There is always a need for that in heavy metal, at its core. That's who they are, and I just don't think anyone has done it better. That's the foundation of all of this."

Randy: "They gave me a job by creating heavy metal! That's their legacy. It doesn't get much bigger than creating an entire genre."

"THERE WERE NO METAL BANDS FOR THEM TO BE INFLUENCED BY!"

BRANN DAUER

MY FAVOURITE SABBATH SONG

Joe Duplantier
Electric Funeral



"Well, Lzzy has picked it, so I feel like I should pick another song, but fuck it, I just love Electric Funeral as well. We did a cover of it and it's just so metal, it's just so catchy and punchy and relentless. I absolutely love it."



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ROCK STAR. SURVIVOR. MADMAN. LEGEND.

From drugs, despondency and dead bats to changing the face of modern metal and gaining an unlikely celebrity status, this is the rollercoaster story of Ozzy Osbourne's solo career

WORDS: RICH HOBSON



Music was the only viable path in life for Ozzy Osbourne. He'd been a squeamish slaughterhouse worker, a dissatisfied day labourer, and even a bungling burglar – the latter landing him in Birmingham's Winson Green Prison when he was 17. But when he stepped onstage with Black Sabbath, Ozzy truly came to life. So when he was fired from the band, on April 27, 1979, for being a "pissed, coked-up loser", he figured his life was over.

"I was unemployed, and unemployable," he later recounted in his autobiography, *I Am Ozzy*. "I remember thinking, 'Well, I've still got a few dollars in my pocket, so I'll have one last fling.'"

Ozzy embraced oblivion with the enthusiasm of someone whose only alternative was the gallows. Stocking up on booze and cocaine while holed up in a Los Angeles hotel, he spent weeks getting blitzed. By his own reckoning, when future wife Sharon Arden, daughter of then-Sabbath manager Don Arden, turned up and offered to manage him if he could get his shit together while he sat "in a puddle of [my] own piss, smoking a joint", nobody was more shocked than him.

What happened next was one of rock's all-time great comebacks. With help from Sharon and, initially, guitarist Randy Rhoads, Ozzy went from write-off to bona fide superstar. Within a few years, he was bigger than he'd ever been with Black Sabbath, and he's never looked back.

Tensions in Black Sabbath had simmered long before Ozzy's firing. After temporarily quitting the band in 1978, he'd kicked around the idea of a band called Blizzard Of Ozz, but it came to nothing. In late 1979, after he'd been booted out of Sabbath, Sharon Arden helped him turn the idea into reality. Recruiting bassist Bob Daisley, drummer Lee Kerslake and keyboardist Don Airey, Ozzy now had a band. But in former Quiet Riot guitarist Randy Rhoads, he also found a kindred creative spirit who encouraged his own songwriting.

Ozzy's arrival as a solo artist came on August 29, 1980, with the release of his debut single, *Crazy Train*. With its bouncing, jubilant riff, it couldn't be further from the doom and dread of Sabbath. It was followed a couple of weeks later by *Blizzard Of Ozz*, the album that would show that, far from being washed up, Ozzy was ready for the incoming decade.

Ozzy's early tours were relatively modest, with the band playing theatres in both the UK and US. It was a calculated move on Sharon's part, so that shows would sell out and Ozzy would be seen as a still-viable force. It paid off. By the end of 1981, they were headlining arenas.

Between tours, personnel in the band changed, with drummer Tommy Aldridge replacing Lee Kerslake and bassist Rudy Sarzo replacing Bob Daisley. Rudy had been recommended to Ozzy by Randy Rhoads, his former bandmate in Quiet Riot.

"They took him on his word, 'cos Randy had so much credibility," Rudy recalls. "There was so much love and respect between Ozzy, Sharon and Randy."

Rudy joined in March 1981, witnessing Ozzy's career take a steady upwards trajectory. The bassist watched as crowds grew bigger gig by gig.

"The best way I can describe it was like being on a rollercoaster," Rudy recalls. "During [Ozzy intro tape] *Carmina Burana*, I saw people's lighters light up for the first time. Time and space had no relevance to reality at the moment. It was like stepping through the looking glass in *Alice In Wonderland*."



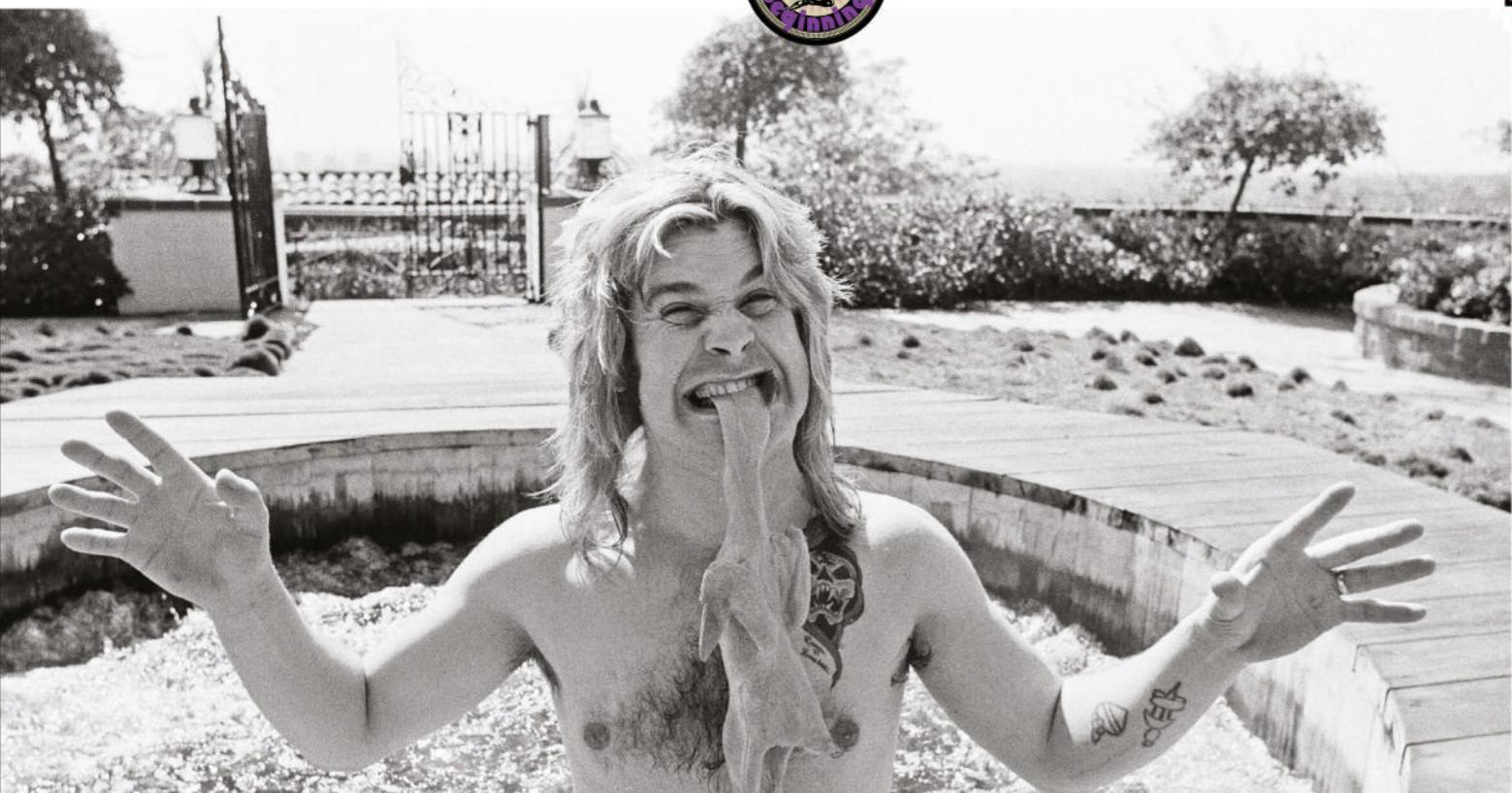
A match made in heaven: Ozzy and Randy Rhoads, pictured with his famous polka dot V, built by Karl Sandoval



Ozzy's first solo band: Randy Rhoads, Lee Kerslake, Ozzy and Bob Daisley

Ozzy's second album, *Diary Of A Madman*, was already in the can by the time Rudy joined (although he was credited on the sleeve, his predecessor, Bob Daisley, had played on it). Released in October 1981, it broke into the US Top 20. It also consolidated Ozzy's 'madman' persona, something Rudy witnessed close up. He recalls a drunken night out in Rochester, New York, that ended in a massive food fight, with Rudy drenched in cheese dressing and forced to walk back to the band's hotel because no taxi would pick him up.

"I looked crazy," he says. "I shower and I'm laying in bed, still drunk, and the whole crew, Sharon and Ozzy storm my room. They throw me on the ground face down and naked, and they pour garbage cans from the lobby on me. Afterwards Ozzy goes, 'Man, that was awesome! You're one of us! That was my initiation!'"



Ozzy with Jake E. Lee, who played on *Bark At The Moon* and *The Ultimate Sin*



Ozzy in 1982, getting to grips with a rubber chicken

MAIN: GETTY/EDDIE SANDERSON, INSET: GETTY/STEVE GRANITZ.

Ozzy himself was already becoming pretty infamous for his behaviour. During a meeting with record label executives in March 1981, he'd bitten the head off a dead dove in front of the shocked, speechless suits. The following January, at a gig in Des Moines, Iowa, he offered fans a live re-enaction when he bit the head off a dead bat during a gig. Rudy Sarzo saw the whole thing unfold.

"The bat actually fell in front of me," Rudy says. "I saw this thing, and I looked at Ozzy and pointed at it with the headstock of my bass, and I just kept on headbanging. After the show, there was an ambulance waiting for Ozzy. So I said to Sharon, 'What happened?' And she says, 'Oh yeah, Ozzy bit into a bat, and we can't

**"SHARON SAID,
'OH YEAH,
OZZY BIT INTO
A BAT'"**

RUDY SARZO

find it because he spat it out into the pit. So they had to take him to [the] emergency [room]."

Ozzy claimed that he'd thought it was a rubber bat, but the incident meant he had to have a rabies shot every day for the rest of the tour. It didn't curtail his wildness – a month later, he was arrested for urinating on The Alamo while wearing one of Sharon's dresses. After some hasty negotiations with the local law enforcement, he avoided jail for desecrating a national monument, instead getting away with a misdemeanour charge of public intoxication.

But the party would soon take a dark turn. On March 19, 1982, Randy Rhoads, costume designer/make-up artist Rachel Youngblood and pilot Andrew Aycock were killed when the light aircraft they were aboard crashed after Aycock decided to 'buzz' the band's tour bus and accidentally clipped a wing on it.

Ozzy, Sharon and Randy's surviving bandmates were devastated. Despite the death of the singer's friend and musical right-hand man, there were touring commitments to fulfil, and less than two weeks later the tour restarted, with stand-in guitarist Bernie Tormé and, later, Brad Gillis. ▶



When Ozzy recruited Zakk Wylde, he hit the bullseye

"I don't know where he found the strength to get through that," says Rudy, who would leave the band shortly after. "To stand up there and sing those songs without Randy must have taken incredible courage. It was hard for all of us."

A permanent replacement for Randy was found in guitarist Jake E. Lee, who appeared on 1983's *Bark At The Moon* album. The title track, with its werewolf-themed video, would get heavy rotation on MTV, raising Ozzy's profile further. 1986's follow-up *The Ultimate Sin* was even more successful, reaching No.8 in the UK and No.6 in the US, and spawning the hit single *Shot In The Dark*. But the trauma of losing Randy Rhoads still haunted the singer. Part of *The Ultimate Sin* was written while Ozzy was checked into rehab clinic the Betty Ford Center to get treatment for alcohol and substance abuse.

By 1987, there was another change of guitarist. Jake E. Lee was out, replaced by Zakk Wylde, an unknown 20-year-old from New Jersey. He'd got the gig after sending in an audition tape and a picture that reminded Ozzy of Randy Rhoads. Zakk's live debut with Ozzy was a baptism of fire – a gig at Wormwood Scrubs prison in London in July 1987.

"The whole thing was bizarro land," Zakk recalls. "We performed in front of these fuckin' lifers – all I could think was, 'I hope I pass this fuckin' audition so they don't leave me behind. I'm the closest thing to Pamela Anderson these motherfuckers are going to see for the rest of their lives!'"

Ozzy and Zakk forged an instant friendship during the making of the singer's fifth solo album, 1988's *No Rest For The*

Wicked. The young guitarist quickly becoming both a valuable musical foil and a partner-in-crime when it came to drinking. But Ozzy's own issues with alcohol weren't going away. In September 1989, he reached rock bottom when he was arrested for attempted murder, after attacking Sharon and trying to strangle her while in a drunken stupor (he insisted he had no memory of the incident). Sharon dropped the charges, but she gave him an ultimatum: he had to stop drinking. And so, as the 1990s began, Ozzy got sober.

At the same time, metal was changing. Alt rock trailblazers such as Jane's Addiction and Faith No More were on the rise, while grunge was stirring in Seattle. This changing of the guard would soon render many rock and metal bands redundant, but Black Sabbath and Ozzy were exceptions. Bands such as Soundgarden and Alice In Chains made no secret of their influence, while Faith No More turned in a faithful cover of Sabbath's *War Pigs* as a bonus track on their breakout 1989 album *The Real Thing*.

In November 1990, the latter were invited to perform *War Pigs* with Ozzy himself at an industry event in Los Angeles. At the afterparty, the singer sat next to FNM drummer Mike 'Puffy' Bordin and struck up a conversation.

"He'd been through a rough time and he looked so sad," Mike tells *Metal Hammer*. "He said to me, 'Why did you guys do *War Pigs* on the album? Are you taking the piss?' It caught me off guard. I launched into this long story about how when I was young my mom killed herself, I didn't have much of a family... Things changed for me when I heard Black Sabbath. So I told him, 'You saved my life.' It really fucking hit him."

"I TOLD OZZY, 'YOU SAVED MY LIFE'"

MIKE BORDIN



Ozzy's led one hell of a life to date, and he's bowing out of touring with a bang





By time Ozzy's sixth solo album, *No More Tears*, was released in 1991, the singer was healthier than he'd ever been. It was reflected in the album, which reinvigorated him for the 1990s. Zakk Wylde recalls Ozzy's ability to come up with vocal melodies on the spot.

"He almost never needed time to work on them," says the guitarist.

But while Ozzy was sober, it didn't mean shades of the old madman didn't occasionally shine through. At one point on tour, Zakk found himself in a hotel room with the singer.

"We were talking about The Who one time and Ozzy goes, 'I've done some crazy things, but I've never thrown a TV out the window,'" says Zakk. "We check the coast is clear and then launch this thing. When it hit the ground, the explosion that it made had us crying. Ozzy goes, 'I've heard a lot of things in my life, but that might be one of the greatest.'"

Ozzy had announced that the *No More Tears* tour would be his last, even dubbing it *No More Tours*. But that plan didn't stick. Ozzy returned in 1995 with a new album, *Ozzmosis*, and the wryly named Retirement Sucks tour.

After the organisers of Lollapalooza had deemed Ozzy not "relevant" enough to play on the travelling alt rock festival, Sharon created Ozzfest in response. Initially a two-day event held in Phoenix, Arizona and Devore, California in 1996, it soon blossomed into a touring juggernaut, establishing Ozzy as the godfather of 90s metal and acting as launchpad for a new generation of bands, from System Of A Down to Slipknot.

Mike Bordin, who had met Ozzy at that LA bash at the beginning of the decade, had signed up to be the drummer in Ozzy's solo band, alongside former Suicidal Tendencies/future Metallica bassist Robert Trujillo.

"I knew my place in that band – it's not my face on the t-shirts!" Mike recalls. "I just gave him everything I had, we'd get through two snares a night. Faith No More was finishing around that time, so it was good to go out every night and play *Goodbye To Romance* and *Flying High Again*."

The 1997 edition of Ozzfest was co-headlined by the reunited Black Sabbath, playing their first tour since 1978, albeit with Mike Bordin in place of original drummer Bill Ward (the latter would rejoin his bandmates for a pair of hometown shows at the end of the year).

The rest of the decade saw Ozzy alternating between solo and Sabbath tours, though the early 2000s would provide the biggest curveball of his career. In 2002, he and his family appeared in reality TV show *The Osbournes*, pushing the singer into the celebrity world.

"All I can say to you is this: number one, if someone offers you a shitload of dough to be on television, you'd have to be a mug to turn it down," he told *Metal Hammer* in 2022. "I thought it was gonna be a piece of cake, but you have a camera crew living in your house for three years and see how you feel at the end of it. You feel like a fucking laboratory rat."

More serious was the 2003 quad-biking accident that nearly killed him. Zakk Wylde recalls visiting him in the hospital shortly afterwards.

"I go down with [my wife] Barbaranne and he's surrounded by all these flowers," the guitarist recalls. "He goes, 'You see those over there Zakk? I don't know who they're from but they say, 'You're not dead yet?!" I suppose at least they cared enough to send the flowers!'"

Ozzy recovered from the accident, but it marked the start of a series of medical issues that he's still dealing with today, including Parkinson's disease (diagnosed in 2019),



Ozzy's 2007 album *Black Rain* was his last with Mike Bordin

numerous spinal surgeries, and an accident at home that almost left him paralysed.

Despite all that, he continued to release music and tour through the 2000s and 2010s, releasing solo albums *Down To Earth* (2001), *Black Rain* (2007) and *Scream* (2010), as well as Black Sabbath's 2013 reunion album, *13*. In 2020, he hit a late-career purple patch after teaming up with hotshot producer and guitarist Andrew Watt for 2020's *Ordinary Man* and 2022's *Patient Number 9*.

The latter two albums featured a stellar guest list of musicians, including Elton John, Tom Morello, Robert Trujillo, Tony Iommi and Duff McKagan. With hindsight, they feel like Ozzy Osbourne closing the circle – something confirmed by his announcement in 2023 that he was retiring from touring.

Except you can't keep a madman down. On July 5, Ozzy returns to the stage at the Back To The Beginning show. He insists that will be his last ever show, though he's talked about recording another album with Andrew Watt.

"Why should you ever retire?" asks Zakk Wylde. "Like Keith Richards once said in an interview, 'Retire from what? Why would I retire from something I enjoy?' That's Ozzy to me too."

"Ozzy has given us everything," Mike says. "I don't remember a world where he wasn't Ozzy. So what should he be remembered for? Whatever the fuck he wants to be! I'll always remember him as a heartfelt, genuine dude that looks you in the eye when you talk. There will never be anyone like him again. He is a working dog in a world of show dogs."

"THE TV HIT THE GROUND AND THE EXPLOSION HAD US CRYING"

ZAKK WYLDE

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CHILDREN OF THE GRAVE

The Back To The Beginning show features the greatest metal bill ever assembled. Over the next 12 pages, some of the musicians appearing share just what Ozzy and Black Sabbath mean to them

WORDS: DAVE EVERLEY & RICH HOBSON







“DID THEY GROW UP IN GRAVEYARDS?!”

Metallica bassist and ex-Ozzy solo band member Robert Trujillo salutes Sabbath's scary magic

Where did you first hear Black Sabbath?

“When I was a kid, a friend had an older brother who had the vinyl of the first album. My first encounter with it was scary – that opening, those three chords, was really frightening at the time. Then we’d light candles and listen to the album and create all of these fantasies about what they were like. Ozzy was like this superhero, but he was frightening at the same time. But Sabbath really resonated with me from a young age.”

What was your go-to Sabbath album when you were a kid?
“Obviously the first album, because I always go back to the opening track, *Black Sabbath*. But to me, *Paranoid* was the ultimate punk rock song – it’s simple, it’s straightforward, not so riff-driven. They could have a song like that and then eventually get to the heaviest groove ever on a song like *Symptom Of The Universe*. Sabbath are the kings of power-groove. Geezer Butler is a grooving bass player – there’s a bounce, there’s a funky aspect. And with him and Bill Ward, the swing was always there.”

You grew up in Southern California. Birmingham must have seemed like a universe away. “Yeah, but it was part of the fantasy. You’ve got this wild visual image that revolved around the music. When we listened to Sabbath and thought of Birmingham, we thought of steel, grey skies and

smoke... lots of smoke. The earth smoking, even the graveyards were smoking. Then Jack The Ripper somehow enters it! Ha ha ha! We’d try and mimic their voices without actually knowing how they talked – these fake British accents. You’re thinking, ‘What are these guys like? Are they magicians or something? Did they grow up in graveyards?’”

Did you cover Sabbath or Ozzy songs in your early bands?

“Absolutely. When I was in high school, I had a band called Oblivion and we covered *War Pigs*. It’s still my go-to song whenever I’m jamming with people. For the fire relief gig in Malibu earlier this year, I jammed *War Pigs* and *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* with Chad Smith from the Red Hot Chili Peppers and Jay Buchanan from Rival Sons. It all started with backyard parties in Venice Beach when I was 17 and I’m still doing it.”

How did you end up playing in Ozzy’s solo band in 1996?

“Going back to 1991, I was in the studio with [my Suicidal Tendencies spin-off band] Infectious Grooves, and Ozzy was recording the *No More Tears* album at the same time. It was like a frat house – the whole complex became Ozzy World and Infectious Grooves happened to be part of it. We were on the same label and that created a connection. Ozzy was always going missing and they’d be looking for him in this big studio complex. He’d always end up in our control room, hanging out. He even guest sang on one of our songs, *Therapy*. He’d come into the room and everything would stop, and we’d play the song to him and he’d do a little Ozzy dance. He was wild and crazy at the time, but he was so fun to be around.”

“A couple of years later, they were looking for a bass player and I got a call from Sharon’s office to audition. The funny thing was, I had the drum intro from [Ozzy’s 1980 solo song] *Over The Mountain* on my answerphone message. And Sharon hears it and was like, ‘Oh my god...’ So that’s how I got the invite. There were, like, 500 bass players at the actual audition. I was fortunate enough to get the gig. For me, it was a dream come true.”

**“I WAS WARNED,
‘OZZY MIGHT
BITE YOU OR PULL
YOUR HAIR’”**

What can you remember about your first show with Ozzy?

“It was a lot of fun. I was warned, ‘Hey, you might come out of the gig with scratches and scrapes, he might bite you, he might pull

your hair, get ready for it.’ So I was kind of scared going into my first couple of shows.”

“I do remember the second show in Las Vegas. We go into *Iron Man*, that main riff, and Ozzy and I kinda start stomping in each others’ faces, and getting lower and lower like two sumo wrestlers. And that’s how the crab walk was born – it was Ozzy and I dancing together to the *Iron Man* riff.”

You played the early Ozzfests with Ozzy’s band. What were those like?

“It’s cool ‘cos I was there from the beginning when there was only a handful of bands. It was pretty scaled down, and then it just grew within a few years to become this massive thing. A lot of bands broke because of Ozzfest – System Of A Down, Deftones. I remember Korn opened for Ozzfest on an earlier



tour [1996's Retirement Sucks tour], and I'd known those guys since they were teenagers in a band called LAPD. Same with Metallica [who supported Ozzy in 1986]. A lot of bands have gotten their chance because of Ozzy.

"Not only was I there for the Ozzfest, but I got to play with Tony [Iommi] and Ozzy. In early 1997, they had gotten into a rehearsal space in Los Angeles and jammed. We weren't necessarily playing Sabbath songs, Tony had some original ideas and we were basically prepping new songwriting ideas. At the time nobody had any idea what it would be for, maybe whatever Ozzy was doing at the time. They were just testing the waters, seeing what was brewing on more of a creative level without actually bringing the band back together. Sure enough, when Tony and Ozzy got in the room and found the magic was still there, they brought in Bill and Geezer and started working towards reuniting and playing live again."

You left Ozzy's band to join Metallica in 2003. How did you break the news to him?

"Ozzy's actually very sensitive, and I think he was sad. It's funny, I was never uncomfortable in any way about Black Sabbath reuniting [in the late 1990s]. Of course it slowed down work for me, 'cos Ozzy's band took second fiddle to such an iconic musical juggernaut, but I was so happy it was happening. I was like, 'Anything I can do to help Ozzy, anything I can do to help Sabbath...'"

"Obviously the opportunity came to audition for Metallica. I didn't expect to get the gig - I was just happy to play with those guys. Fortunately it ended up that I got the gig, so I flew back down to LA to tell him. He knew I was about to join so he was happy for me, but at the same time I think he was sad, 'cos we did have a connection and a bond after seven years."

Metallica inducted Black Sabbath into the Rock And Roll Hall Of Fame in 2006 and you played two Sabbath songs in front of Black Sabbath. Nerve-wracking?

"It was crazy. Playing *Hole In The Sky* and *Iron Man* was a special moment, and seeing them in the audience was surreal. But it was impactful too, 'cos I was looking out into the audience and I could see people like Sting and members of [late jazz icon] Miles Davis's band digging it."

So have you decided what you'll be playing at the Back To The Beginning gig in July?

"We definitely have an idea of what we want to play and we're very excited. I can honestly say I haven't seen my bandmates get this excited about covering songs before. We cover songs often, but it feels so good to dive into Sabbath. We have got something up our sleeves, but I don't want to divulge it."

What's the one Ozzy or Sabbath deep cut you'd like to hear played at the show?

"I love *Hand Of Doom* [from *Paranoid*]. That is such a special song. I've run into some of the people who are going to be there and are so excited about covering Sabbath and Ozzy songs, and most of them have mentioned *Hand Of Doom*. I've had, like, five people saying they want to play that song."

What should Ozzy and Sabbath be remembered for?

"The genre of music we make today, whether it's Metallica or anyone, it's spawned from them. But their music, it covers so many genres. There's a lot of different styles and varieties in it. They're one of the few bands that punk musicians have nothing but respect for, that country musicians have nothing but respect for, even jazz musicians – they listen to *Vol. 4* and there's so much swing and melody and personality, it almost feels like a big band. And Ozzy has the most iconic voice in rock'n'roll and Geezer is at the highest level as a bass player. Geezer's a great friend and he's a humble human being." 





“LAYNE WOULD SING ALONG TO SWEET LEAF!”

Alice In Chains guitarist Jerry Cantrell got his love of riffs from Iommi... and his bassist from Ozzy

Can you remember hearing Sabbath for the first time?

“I was in eighth grade, I think. My next door neighbour, Dale, was a really cool dude with a fucking great stereo. I used to spend a lot of time at his place, and I’m pretty sure that was my first introduction to smoking pot too.”

What was it about them that hooked you in?

“It’s that unique musical fingerprint. I was trying to learn how to play guitar, and here was this music that was just so guitar-driven, so heavy, and powered by these riffs that weren’t too hard to figure out. Pretty soon I’d figured out how to play *Iron Man*, but that was super-fucking-cool to me. That music is so uniquely them. Nobody else sounds like that.”

Which Sabbath albums were you into as a kid?

“The Ozzy albums were foundational for me, but my first concert was Heaven & Hell – Sabbath with Ronnie [James Dio]. Another cool thing about Sabbath is that they went through a lot of changes and growth, a lot of personnel stuff. That’s stuff I related to so much more later in my own life. I was really into *Diary Of A Madman* and *Blizzard Of Ozz* too.”

Did Tony Iommi influence you as a guitarist back then?

“There are a few guitar players in a few bands where you can hear this instant connection to what we do, and I definitely think Iommi is that for my playing. But I can’t recall ever meeting anyone who plays hard rock who doesn’t like Sabbath – it’s just not a conversation you ever have.”

What are your memories of Alice In Chains opening for Ozzy in the early 1990s?

“We fell in with them right away. We became fast friends with Zakk [Wylde], Randy [Castillo, drummer] and Mike [Inez, bass]. We were initially only invited out on one leg, but we’d be about to finish up and Ozzy would swing by – ‘Hey, you wanna do another?’ We got to hang out with him for a while, which was amazing. We were going through a personnel change [with the departure of bassist Mike Starr], but spending all the time with Mike, he was the obvious choice for a replacement. Considering he was playing in Ozzy’s band, we figured it’d be a tough ask, but apparently Ozzy told him, ‘If you don’t join that band we’re gonna have to go to the hospital, ‘cos it’ll take them a week to get my foot out of your ass!’”

What song or songs are you going to play at the gig?

“One that’s come up over the last few rehearsals is *Fairies Wear Boots*, which is pretty badass. In the early days of Alice I’d fuck around with *Sweet Leaf* and Layne would sing along.”

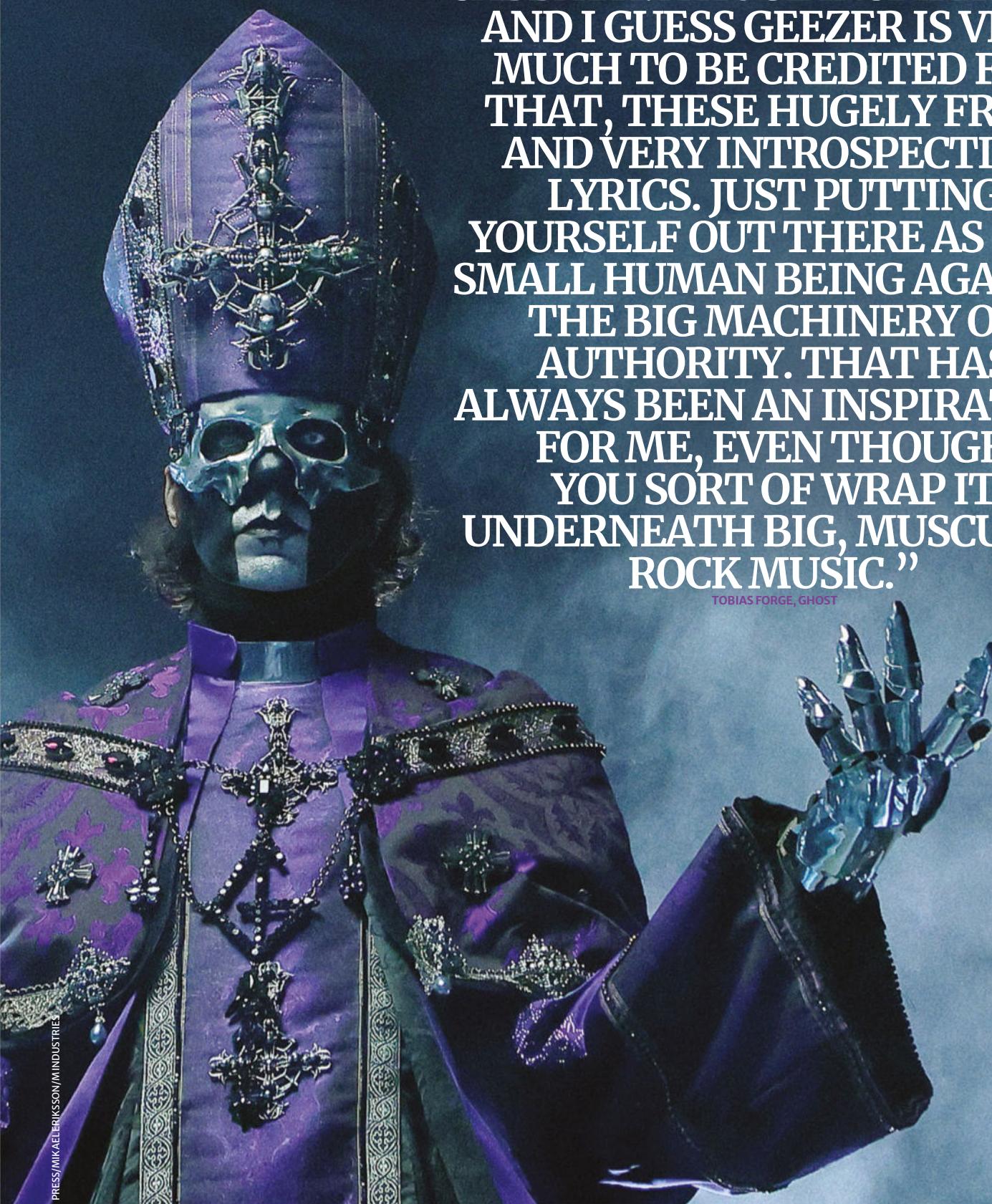
What should Sabbath and Ozzy be remembered for?

“The music! They’ve got so much commitment to what they do, and everyone could learn a thing or two from them.” 



“I OBVIOUSLY KEEP ON TALKING A LOT ABOUT BLACK SABBATH. A HUGE INSPIRATION, AND I GUESS GEEZER IS VERY MUCH TO BE CREDITED FOR THAT, THESE HUGELY FRAIL AND VERY INTROSPECTIVE LYRICS. JUST PUTTING YOURSELF OUT THERE AS THE SMALL HUMAN BEING AGAINST THE BIG MACHINERY OF AUTHORITY. THAT HAS ALWAYS BEEN AN INSPIRATION FOR ME, EVEN THOUGH YOU SORT OF WRAP IT UNDERNEATH BIG, MUSCULAR ROCK MUSIC.”

TOBIAS FORGE, GHOST







“OZZY WAS GIVING ME THE STARE OF DEATH!”

Anthrax's Scott Ian on hearing Sabbath as an eight-year-old and confusing the hell out of Ozzy

When did you first hear Sabbath and Ozzy?

“I had an uncle, Mitch, who's only 10 years older than me. He'd have been 18, I was eight. I would sit in his room and look through his comics and flip through his vinyl collection. One day, I look at this album cover and I'm like, 'What is this? What is Black Sabbath?' And he went, 'Oh, that's 'acid rock' – I still have no idea what that means. But he put it on, and the first song starts with the wind and the bell and the thunder and then the riff kicks in. I'm sitting in my uncle's bedroom, with black lights on, all these weird posters, listening to Tony Iommi playing the Devil's triad riff. I'm thinking, 'Oh my god, this is really scary.' But I instantly became a Black Sabbath fan.”

Did you cover any Sabbath songs in the early days?

“Oh yeah. *Paranoid* and *War Pigs* and *Sweet Leaf* and *Symptom Of The Universe*... I had probably played almost every song off the first six Sabbath albums before Anthrax was even a band. And then of course Anthrax covered *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath* as the B-side of the *Indians* single. Sabbath runs so deep for me.”

Anthrax supported Ozzy in the late 80s. What was that like?

“We did two months with him on the No Rest For The Wicked tour [in 1988], and he could not have been nicer. He would pop into the dressing room every day and hang out. Ozzy was firing on all cylinders and we got to tour with him all around the States, which was just incredible.”

What's your best Ozzy story?

“Back in 2001, I had a show on VH-1 in the States. I had guests on, and we booked Ozzy.

“IT WAS SO HARD TO KEEP OUR MOUTHS SHUT!”

we know what we're doing and we're really excited about it. It was hard, 'cos we'd known about the show for a couple of months before it was announced. You know how hard it was for us to keep our mouths shut?!”

What should Ozzy and Black Sabbath be remembered for?

“For being an unbelievably original band who forged their own path and influenced everything that came after them. When you see the tree of heavy metal with all the branches coming off, Black Sabbath are the roots. None of the bands at that show would exist without Black Sabbath.”

NONE MORE BLACK

Ten killer Black Sabbath and Ozzy covers

FAITH NO MORE

WAR PIGS (1989)

Was it serious? Was Mike Patton taking the piss? Either way, *Faith No More* delivered a spot-on version of the Sabbs' anti-war classic.

SOUNDGARDEN

INTO THE VOID (SEALTH) (1991)

The grunge pioneers kept the lead-heavy riff, but Chris Cornell replaced the original sci-fi lyrics with words taken from a speech by native American leader Chief Seattle, after whom Seattle is named.

TYPE O NEGATIVE

BLACK SABBATH (FROM THE SATANIC PERSPECTIVE) (1996)

The goth metal titans turn the Sabbath song on its head, with Peter Steele singing it from Satan's POV. Genius.

MACHINE HEAD

HOLE IN THE SKY (2000)

Squelching bass, massive riffs and a powerhouse performance from Robb Flynn perfectly captured the energy of the 1975 original.

CRADLE OF FILTH

MR. CROWLEY (2004)

At the apex of their powers around *Nymphetamine*, Cradle Of Filth's take on *Mr Crowley* chucks up shades of Tim Burton via Mayhem.

HIM

HAND OF DOOM (2007)

Never has mortal dread sounded sexier than when Ville Valo and co. took on this *Paranoid*-era classic.

ORANGE GOBLIN

SYMPOTM OF THE UNIVERSE (2010)

Goblin's whole career reads like a tribute to Black Sabbath, so it's really no surprise their take on *Sympotm* is greasy heavy metal brilliance.

OPETH

SOLITUDE (2014)

With its melancholic tones and beautiful melodies, Opeth's faithful take on Sabbath's 1971 ballad made it feel like a long-lost cut from the Swedes' own *Damnation* album.

CHELSEA WOLFE X DILLINGER ESCAPE PLAN X MUTOID MAN

CRAZY TRAIN (2020)

If Sabbath and Ozzy had never split, *Crazy Train* might've sounded like this creepy, Halloween-friendly rendition made for YouTube's *Two Minutes To Late Night*.

POWERWOLF

BARK AT THE MOON (2023)

Germany's werewolf-obsessives were like ducks to water when it came to taking on this Ozzy classic with extra power metal oomph.



“THERE WASN’T A NAME FOR WHAT WE WERE DOING!”

Ex-Judas Priest guitarist K.K. Downing witnessed the birth of Sabbath in Birmingham

Former Judas Priest guitarist K.K. Downing was a teenager when he saw Black Sabbath for the very first time.

“It was at Henry’s Blueshouse, which was a room in a pub in the middle of Birmingham, full of drag queens walking about,” he recalls. “There was a stage about nine inches high and everybody sat cross-legged on the floor. And Black Sabbath were amazing. They had this aura about them.”

The exact date of the show has been lost to time, but would’ve been in late 1969 or early 1970. K.K. himself was on the cusp of joining the nascent Priest, who would go on to blaze their own trail from the backstreets of Birmingham to the arenas and stadiums of the world. He’d been lured away from 60s pop by the likes of Jimi Hendrix and Cream, and, as a guitarist, was exploring heavier sounds.

“SABBATH HAD THIS AURA ABOUT THEM”

“I remember hearing that first Sabbath album when it came out and thinking, ‘Thank fuck there’s somebody else on the planet doing this kind of thing,’” he says. “Rock itself hardly existed, let alone hard rock or heavy metal. There wasn’t a name for what we were doing.”

Part of Sabbath’s appeal was that they weren’t some untouchable rock stars. Here were four working-class kids who seemed like they’d just stumbled onto a stage.

“They were like us – a bunch of kids with long hair who looked like they didn’t want to get a proper job, thinking that maybe one day they could get good at what they do and make some money,” recalls K.K..

Despite the two bands starting within a couple of years of each other, Sabbath had a head start on Priest: Ozzy and co were a little older, and their first album was released in 1970, whereas Priest’s debut, *Rock Rolla*, came out in 1974. K.K. remembers his own band supporting Sabbath at the Walsall Masonic Hall in the early 70s.

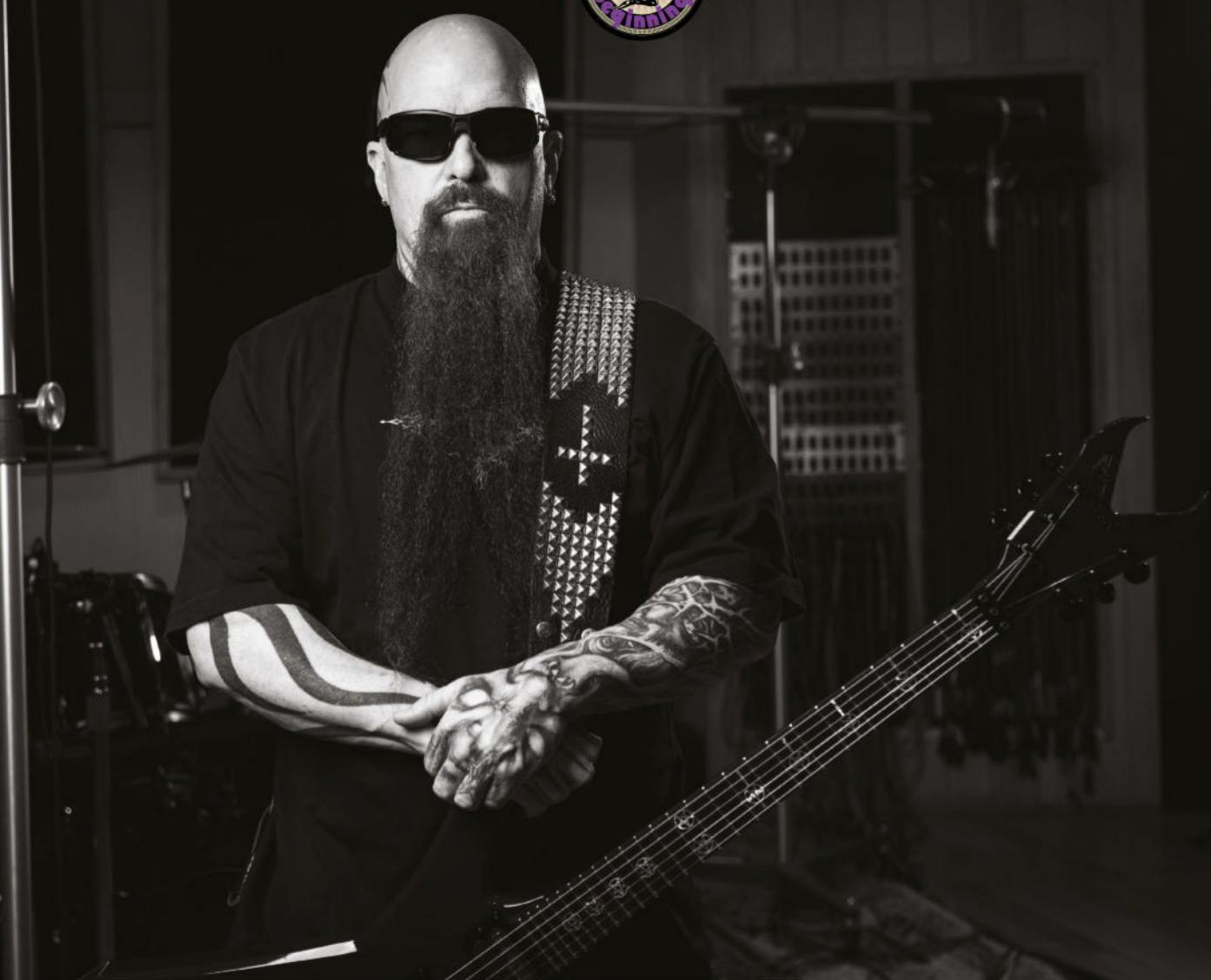
“There couldn’t have been more than 130 people there,” he says. “But they had an album out – they were a proper band. We were a bit jealous. But their success was inspiring.”

Priest would go on to become one of metal’s most successful and influential bands, though their workload meant they rarely crossed paths with their fellow Brummies. The next time the bands played together was on the 2004 Ozzfest, when Priest were second on the bill to Sabbath. On one memorable date in New Jersey, Rob Halford had to step in for Ozzy after the latter was sidelined with bronchitis.

“I’d never seen so many people on the side of the stage,” says K.K., who left Priest in 2011 and now leads KK’s Priest. “I couldn’t even get on the side of the stage. Zakk [Wylde, Ozzy’s guitarist] was there and ended up literally picking me up and standing me on a flight case!” **H**



ADAM GASSON



“IT WAS A FANBOY, STARSTRUCK SCENARIO”

Black Sabbath are the only band to have left Slayer’s Kerry King speechless

When did you first hear Sabbath or Ozzy?
“I can’t really say when I first heard Sabbath, but the first time I heard Ozzy solo was probably *Crazy Train* on the radio. And my thought was, ‘Who is this fucking guitar player?!’ I was fortunate enough to see that particular line-up on New Year’s Eve, just before Randy’s untimely passing. Super-glad I did, because it was crushing!”

How did Black Sabbath influence you as a musician?

“I think anybody in my genre of music that doesn’t credit Sabbath as a major influence is kidding themselves. If it weren’t for Sabbath, would there be a Metallica? Would there be a Diamond Head? A Venom, a Lamb Of God, even a Slayer? Maybe. I would even

go so far as to say probably. But I sure as hell don’t know that any of those bands would sound the same without Sabbath.”

When did you first meet Ozzy and the rest of Sabbath?

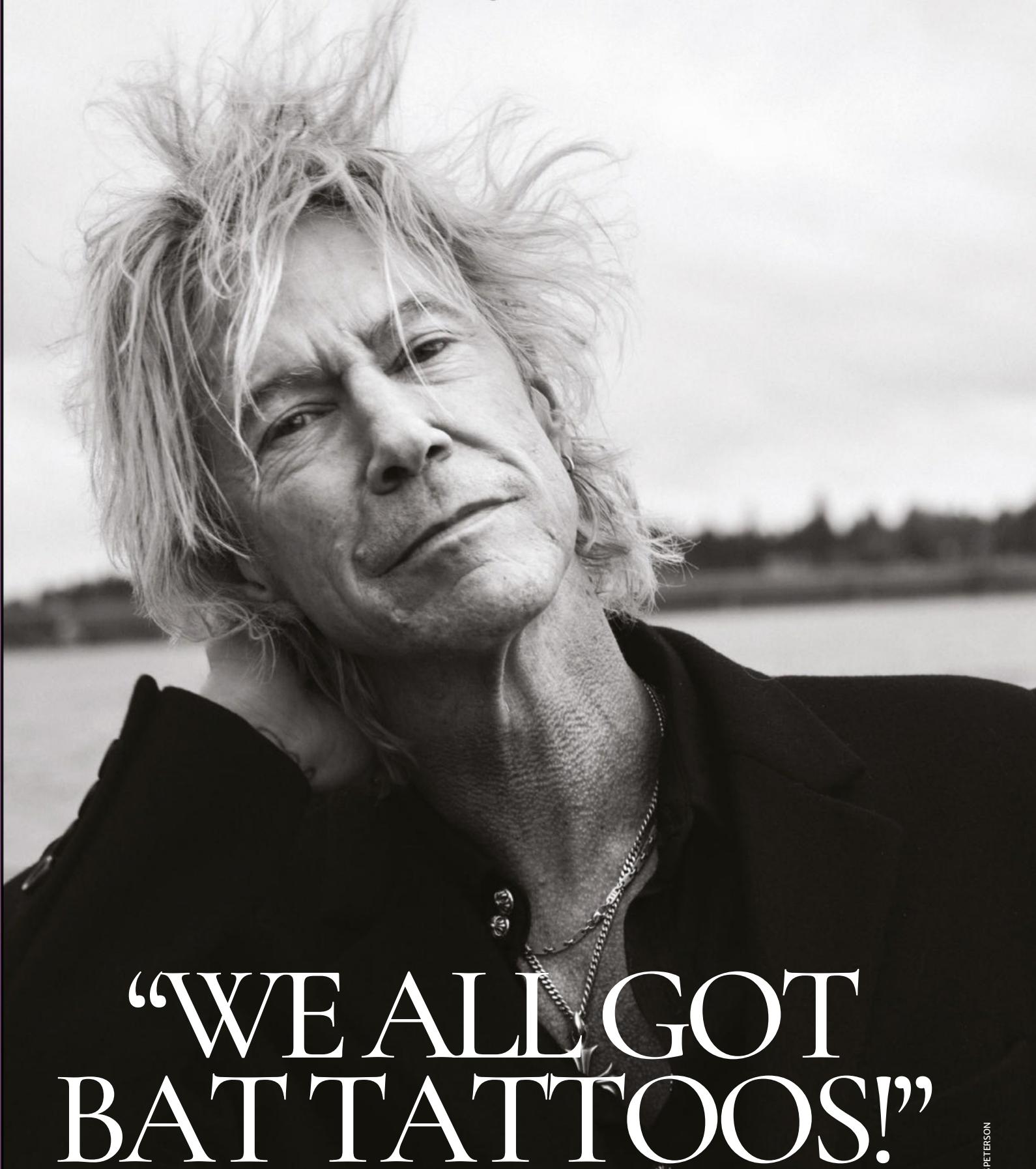
“It was definitely a fanboy, starstruck scenario. I’m guessing it was around the first couple of Ozzfests. I couldn’t talk to any of them. I couldn’t think of anything to say! It was years later, probably on the 2004 Ozzfest, that we were in the same hotel. I opened my door and Tony was walking down

the hall. My bold ass puts his head down and says, ‘Hey, Tony.’ I guess it was a success.”

Why was Ozzfest so important?

“It was super-pivotal in bringing festival situations to America. My favourite bill was 2004, with the original Sabbath, reunited Judas Priest and Slayer – my dream line-up. If you’d told teenage Kerry that bill was gonna happen in the future, a ‘Fuck off!’ would have come outta my mouth. Now it’s completely unbelievable that we get to participate in Sabbath’s farewell gig.”

“BEING PART OF THE LAST GIG IS UNBELIEVABLE”



“WE ALL GOT BAT TATTOOS!”

Guns N' Roses bassist Duff McKagan on Sabbath's punk rock edge – and jamming with the masters



What did Black Sabbath mean to a young punk fan growing up in Seattle?

"Sabbath were there for me before punk. We had an FM radio station that would play whole sides of new albums. I heard *Iron Man*, and to a six- or seven-year-old, that's, like, 'Wow!' And then when you start playing, you go, 'Well, maybe I could play that.' Sabbath seemed to make things accessible."

Did you play Sabbath covers in your early bands?

"[Duff's teenage punk group] The Fartz did *Children Of The Grave*. This was back in '81. I was playing drums then, but I didn't try the fancy stuff. We were hardcore - we just went faster. When you go faster, you can get away with a bunch of stuff."

Was there any punk in Sabbath?

"Without a doubt. Punk rock to me was doing what you wanted to do with truth and integrity, and that was Sabbath too. They did not give a fuck. They went to the edge many times. And it's not just punk. *Sabbath Bloody Sabbath*, when it drops down to that low D-riff... without that fucking riff there's no Seattle sound, there's no desert rock."

When did you first meet Ozzy or the rest of Sabbath?

"Ozzy, it could have been the late 80s or early 90s, I don't know. I famously had a little dark period, which I don't remember a lot from, and he famously had a couple of dark periods. Velvet Revolver did the Ozzfest and I got to hang out with him. We were like, 'Did we hang out back then? It feels like we may have done...'"

"I'D JAM WITH OZZY AND TONY, THEN WE'D HAVE TEA"

"Then a few years later, maybe 2012, I get a call from Sharon: 'Could you come out here and jam with them? Ozzy and Tony are in the studio downstairs - Geezer's not here, but Tony's hot.' I'm like, 'Wait, you want me to play with them?!' I got to see the genesis of Tony Iommi's riffs. I got to see Ozzy scribbling away lyrics. And then we'd go upstairs and have tea, and they'd be talking about some teacher they had in elementary school. It was so cool."

You played on Ozzy's two most recent solo albums. What was that like?

"[Producer and guitarist] Andrew Watt called me up. He said, 'Man, I'm making this Ozzy record, I think we gotta do something quick - Ozzy's ready.' So me, [Red Hot Chili Peppers drummer] Chad Smith and Watt went in and recorded nine songs in four days. We'd listen to Black Flag or Nazareth on the way to the studio, not Ozzy or Sabbath, just to bring something fresh to it. That was *Ordinary Man*. We wrote some songs for the next record too. It was pretty epic. We all got bat tattoos."

What makes Ozzy a great frontman?

"He made it seem like anyone could get up and sing. Not that he's not a great singer - he is. But Robert Plant - I can't sing like that. But Ozzy? He's one of us."



"OZZY SAID, 'GET WHIT TO SING INSTEAD'"

How Ugly Kid Joe frontman Whitfield Crane found himself singing for Black Sabbath at a gig nobody saw

“Hearing Black Sabbath when I was a young kid changed the trajectory of my life. I was awakened by those sounds. So when Ugly Kid Joe got to tour with Black Sabbath and Motörhead in 1992, it was one of the greater moments of my life. We'd heard Ozzy wasn't partying, so we were, 'What should we do? Should we not party? Will we get kicked off the tour?' But then he sent us two cases of beer and it was like, 'OK, alright...'

"When the original members of Sabbath reunited in 1997 for two shows at the Birmingham NEC, I actually got to sing with them. They were rehearsing 'cos they were gonna record a live album, but Ozzy was like, 'I'm not gonna sing a whole set of Sabbath songs in rehearsal and then do it again, twice.' What I heard was that Ozzy said,

'Get Whit to do it.' Now if I was sitting in a chair watching them and somebody said, 'Do you want to do this?', I would be too scared. But Ozzy told me to do it. It was sanctioned.

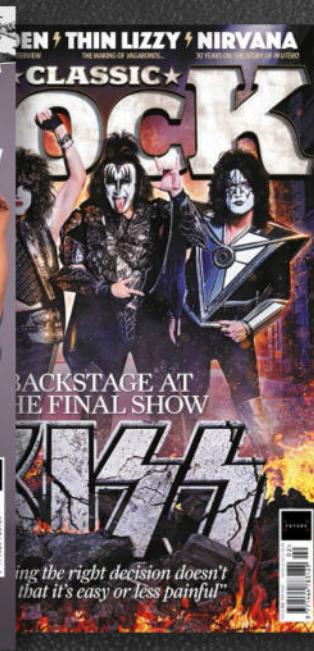
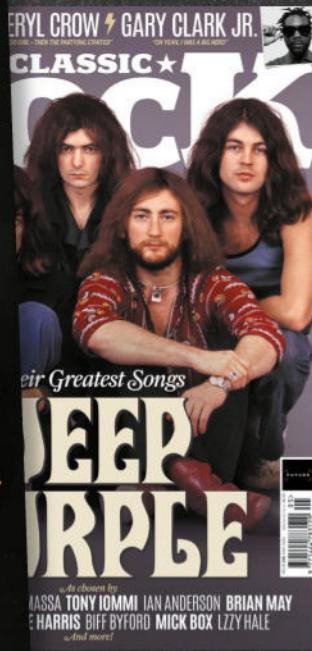
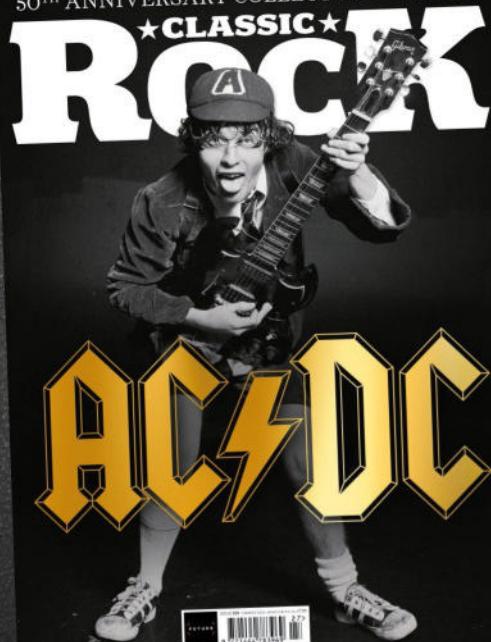
"So this was me singing a whole set, on Ozzy's mic, loud as you can get, with Black Sabbath at the NEC in Birmingham. It was so fucking rad.

I had sung a couple of those songs live before with my bands, but I hadn't sung most of them. But I knew them. If I saw Tony

"OZZY SENT US TWO CASES OF BEER!"

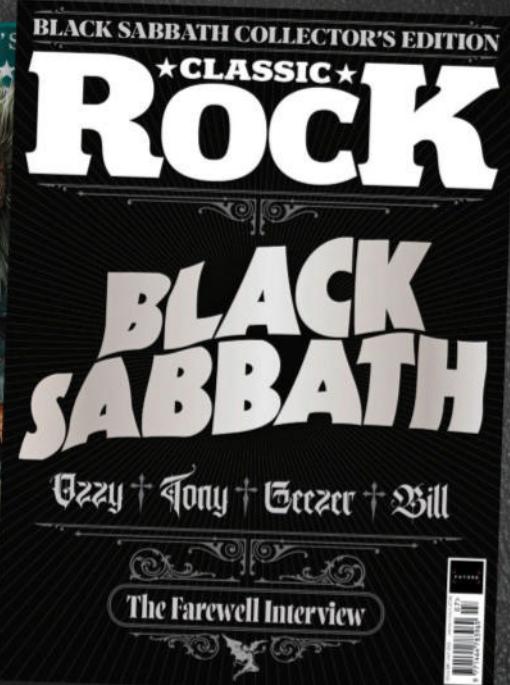
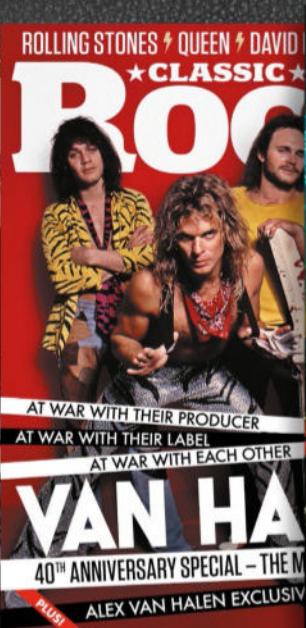
Iommi in a coffee shop, I don't know if I would have the courage to go up to him and say hello, but there I was doing soundcheck! I even got them to play *Hole In The Sky*, which they hadn't played since whenever. And yes, there is a cassette of it somewhere, and yes, I have listened back to it and it sounds great."

50TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTOR'S EDITION



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“WAR PIGS SOUNDS LIKE A SERMON!”

We asked ex-Megadeth bassist David Ellefson to pick his perfect Black Sabbath and Ozzy Osbourne setlist

I Don't Know (Blizzard Of Ozz, 1980)

“My first band when I was 15 used to play *Paranoid*, which was my gateway into Black Sabbath. But not long after, I heard a cassette of *Blizzard Of Oz*. *I Don't Know* is the first song, and that was when I was like, ‘Oh my god, what is this?’ That was really my gateway into Ozzy’s world, even more than *Paranoid*.”

Crazy Train (Blizzard Of Ozz, 1980)

“Come on, this is prime Ozzy. It’s the second song on the album, it’s got to be the second song in the set.”

Flying High Again (Diary Of A Madman, 1981)

“The first two Ozzy solo albums are just untouchable. And the bass player [Bob Daisley] wrote a lot of the music and lyrics.”

War Pigs (Paranoid, 1970)

“We’ve had some Ozzy songs, so let’s have some Sabbath songs. This sounds like a sermon. It’s iconic.”

Black Sabbath (Black Sabbath, 1970)

“What can you say? It’s so haunting and dark. When I hear it, my mind immediately goes to the cover of that first album: ‘Who is that woman? Is she a witch or something?’”

Diary Of A Madman (Diary Of A Madman, 1981)

“Me and my friends spent hours looking at the cover, trying to find occult messages. ‘Oh my god – is that a head?’ It was like the circus had rolled into town and they’d opened up the medicine wagon.”

Children Of The Grave (Master Of Reality, 1971)

“One of the great Sabbath songs. Bill Ward and Geezer Butler are one of the greatest rhythm sections ever.”

The Ultimate Sin (The Ultimate Sin, 1986)

“*The Ultimate Sin* is such a great Ozzy solo album. The title track is so heavy and ominous.”

Shot In The Dark (The Ultimate Sin, 1986)

“That’s the flipside of it. It’s a great 80s metal song.”

Mr. Crowley (Blizzard Of Ozz, 1980)

“Come on, when you hear that song when you’re 15 years old, you’re like, ‘What is this?’ That intro – it’s so scary and spooky.”



Mama, I'm Coming Home (No More Tears, 1991)

“That’s a different side of Ozzy. It’s him when he’s being vulnerable. I get goosebumps just thinking about it. And Lemmy was a co-writer. Another bass player!”

Crazy Babies (No Rest For The Wicked, 1988)

“That’s an underrated record, and it’s a great song. It was Zakk Wylde’s first album, too.”

ENCORE

Iron Man (Paranoid, 1970)

“Those opening lines are great – they define the song. And it has one of Tony Iommi’s greatest ever riffs.”

Paranoid (Paranoid, 1970)

“I’ll put this in the set because it’s a classic and the perfect way to sign off. But also to make the 15-year-old me happy.”

WHERE IS OZZY?



WHERE IS OZZY?

THE OZZEMAN COMETH

But where is he? Ahead of the Double O's final show, see if you can find him on these pages!

WHERE IS OZZY?



WHERE IS AZZY?



WHERE IS OZZY?



WHERE IS OZZY?



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SLAYFRRR!



SLAYFRRR!



THE KNOWLEDGE

SLAYER

Chaos, blood, death, resurrection – Kerry King and Tom Araya look back on the tumultuous journey of the thrash icons who pushed metal to new extremes

WORDS: PAUL TRAVERS

Few bands have left more of a mark on any music scene than the indelible bloody handprint Slayer have left on metal. Their blistering speed, controversial themes and uncompromising attitude have had a profound influence, not only on their thrash metal peers, but on death metal, black metal and every other extreme subgenre to come.

When asked to sum up his band's enduring impact on the metal scene, guitarist Kerry King shrugs. "It's hard for me to answer, because that sounds like a question for fans. I think it's important, and I think you can see that just by how people react to us now, coming back and playing. Just the mention of Slayer sets off frenzies, because that's what Slayer fans do. They scream, 'Slayer!' everywhere."

Indeed, 'Slayer!' – more properly pronounced 'SLAYYYYYYAAAARGHH!' – has become a rallying cry for metalheads worldwide. In some ways they've transcended music to become a recognisable cultural touchstone. There's even an annual International Day Of Slayer every June 6, with the inaugural event having launched on 06/06/06.

It's all a far cry from the band that struggled to get a gig in a local Los Angeles scene dominated by the likes of Ratt, Dokken and rising stars Mötley Crüe.

"We didn't fit in," vocalist and bassist Tom Araya recalls. "We didn't look like guys trying to look girls. And we were no different than our fans. Club owners would tell us we couldn't use or do things for our show, and we did them anyway and got banned from the clubs."

Slayer's first ever show took place at South Gate Park Auditorium, Los Angeles, on Halloween 1981, but as time went on they gravitated further and further from the neon strips of LA itself.

"The LA scene predominantly was hair metal back then, Mötley Crüe and all that followed. So we pretty much were an Orange County band, just because we did not want to be under that hair metal moniker, which was synonymous with Hollywood," Kerry explains. "Metallica was out there too, before they became a Bay Area band, so there was a lot of thrash going on in Orange County. We made it the home of what became thrash metal, actually."

Tom insists that there was a sense of camaraderie between the new breed of bands with "no competition" as they grew up together.

"I think it was a little bit of both, actually," considers Kerry. "In the early days we were all friends, but we were young men and there was definitely competition. I remember we would get our hands on a Metallica demo and say, 'Alright, this is where they are going, we have got to outdo that.' And I know for a fact that Kirk [Hammett] and probably James [Hetfield] as well would get our records and say, 'Oh, we have got to go beat that.'"

The first Slayer track to feature on record was *Aggressive Perfector*, which followed Metallica's *Hit The Lights* and Overkill's *No Holds Barred* onto Metal Blade's influential *Metal Massacre* series, appearing on 1983's *Metal Massacre III*. It was followed by full-length debut *Show No Mercy* on the same label later that year. Kerry recalls recording it on a graveyard shift from midnight until 6am each night, to get cheaper studio rates. While it's recognised as an influential release now, it was still very much a work in progress, and a primitive version of what Slayer would go on to become.

"You gotta understand, when our first record came out, Jeff [Hanneman, guitar] and I were 19 years old. I think Dave

Slayer in 1983, with the future Mrs Hanneman



[Lombardo, drums] was 18. We were just a bunch of dumb teenagers trying to carve out a space in the world for ourselves," Kerry says. "Honestly, everybody hated it at first. It took a while for people to come around. I remember some of the early reviews of *Show No Mercy*, people just despised it."

Not everyone failed to get it, of course.

"Someone got us a tape of *Show No Mercy*, and we were like, 'These guys are just like us, this is crazy!'" Exodus

guitarist Gary Holt told *Metal Hammer* last year. "'We want to kill shit and hack things up with machetes with them!'"

1984's *Haunting The Chapel* EP was a huge leap forward, but for most it was 1985 full-length follow-up *Hell Awaits* that really saw Slayer start to come into

their own. Kerry still sees it as heavily derivative of Danish Satanic occult metal kingpins Mercyful Fate.

"The influence was all over that record," he says. "We were still figuring out who we were, so we were still emulating our heroes. To me, it was a step forward. Yeah, we did mature as songwriters and musicians, but that one was still us chasing our heroes," the guitarist says.

If *Hell Awaits* wore its influences heavily, Slayer's third album was something else. Released in 1986 and produced by rising star Rick Rubin, *Reign In Blood* stripped the comparatively convoluted approach of its predecessor down to the bloody bone. It was an instant classic of jugular-slicing thrash excellence, that still stands as one of metal's most perfectly formed and important releases nearly four decades on. Which isn't a bad achievement for a collection of songs weighing in at less than half an hour.

"We didn't realise how important it was at the time. But we knew we had something special when we noticed that the album was only 28 minutes," says Tom.

SLAYERRR!

Kerry King: not to be confused with hair metal



►

"The funny thing about that [is] when we were rehearsing it, it came in around 33 or 34 minutes. But then when we actually recorded it, and put it on vinyl or cassette or whatever back then, it came in at around 28 minutes," Kerry adds. "Familiarity sped it up and Dave was notorious for speeding things up, so it just became faster as a whole."

The guitarist acknowledges that *Reign In Blood* was the blueprint for the classic Slayer sound that the metal world would come to know and love. "It was the maturing of Slayer, so to speak, and the beginning of the sound everybody knows Slayer as today," he says. "I think not only was it a great recording with great songs, but it was also a change as to exactly what we sounded like and how we were going to sound for the next 40 years."

The album didn't have the same commercial success as Metallica's own 1986 milestone, *Master Of Puppets*, but it peaked at No.94 in the US Billboard charts, which was impressive enough for such an extreme set of songs. The band also saw their live shows getting more frenzied and chaotic. New Jersey thrashers Overkill supported Slayer on the US *Reign In Blood* tour and frontman Bobby 'Blitz' Ellsworth recalls seeing someone plunging from the balcony of The Forum in Los Angeles during Slayer's set.

"It was purposeful, his way of showing his exhilaration," the singer told *Hammer* in 2021. "Sure, those gigs were violent. But it wasn't as if the violence escalated – it was as if someone just pushed a button. You didn't see the crowd get whipped into this frenzy – the frenzy was instantaneous."

Along with the attention came an increased scrutiny of Slayer's lyrics, particularly the Hanneman-penned album opener, *Angel Of Death*, which was marked by its bowel-churning scream and a factual dissection of Nazi doctor Josef Mengele and his death camp experiments. Columbia Records refused to distribute the Def Jam-released album, leading to a delay in its release before Geffen came onboard. It also fuelled accusations in certain quarters that Slayer were glorifying their subject matter.

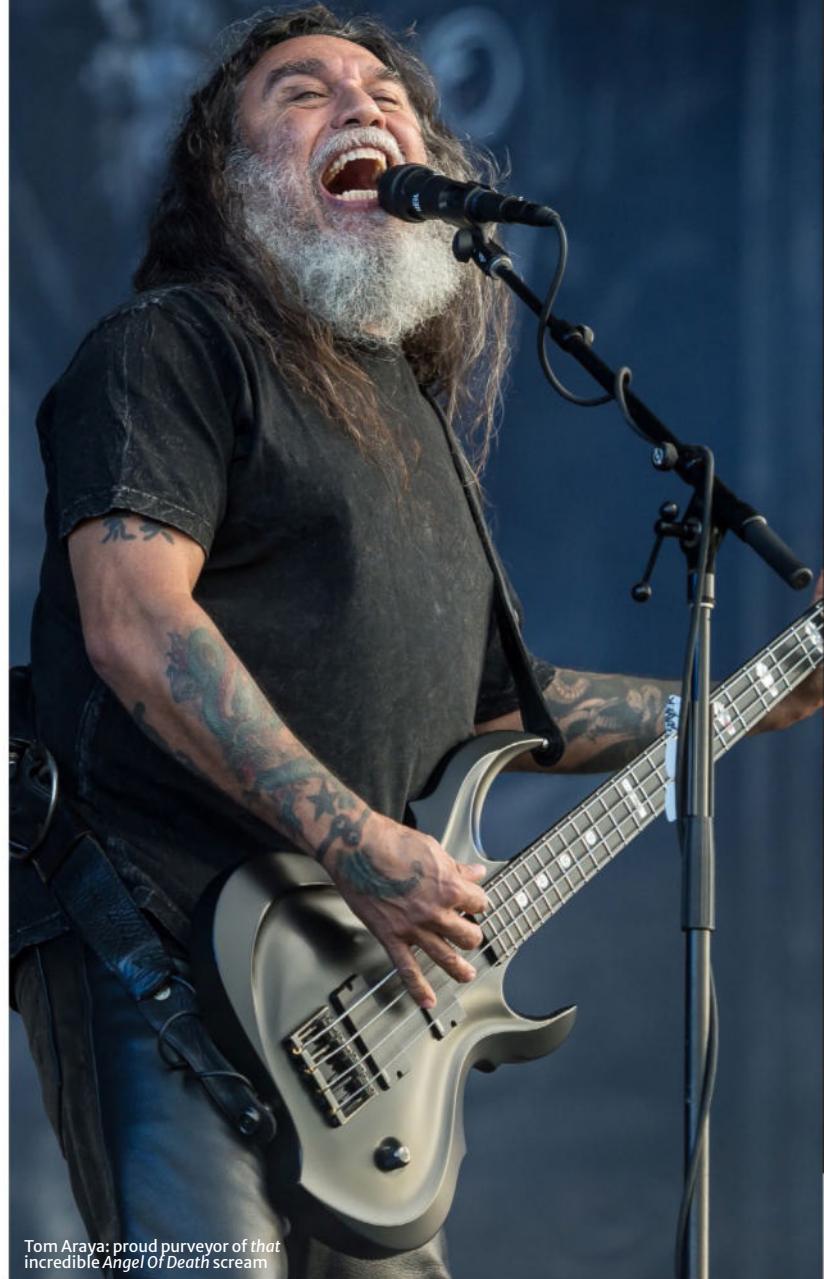
"It was written documentary style. It was not writing in praise of Nazi Germany. It was not writing in praise of Josef Mengele," Kerry states emphatically. "Slayer never backed away from writing about controversial things, and Jeff was very much into World War II. That is where his writing interest was. A bunch of people took it the wrong way and thought we were Nazi sympathisers, and nothing could be further from the truth. It was a horrible time in world history, but it is a historic fact, and it is something that should be brought up so people do not forget."

Controversy aside, *Reign In Blood* boosted Slayer's profile but they weren't exactly drowning in the trappings of success. Dave Lombardo – whose propulsive rhythms and furious blastbeats played a major part in Slayer's sound – left the band for the first time during a tour supporting W.A.S.P. He would later tell us that he was not making enough money to cover his bills.

"I was like, 'Fuck this, man, I'm not going to put all my fucking effort into this if we're signed to a major label and going out on these extravagant tours and I'm coming home with no money,'" he explained.

The band recruited Tony Scaglione from New York thrashers Whiplash to complete the tour, with Dave returning to the fold in 1987. Having made the ultimate thrash album with *Reign In Blood*, the band decided it was time to take a different tack when it came to 1988 follow-up *South Of Heaven*.

"We were like, 'Alright, we made this super-blistering fast record. We knew we did not want to do *Reign In Blood* part two,'" Kerry recalls. "The mindset was to go the heavier route. We still had speedy songs, but there is a lot more



Tom Araya: proud purveyor of that incredible *Angel Of Death* scream

heavy stuff we did intentionally to offset the fast songs when you play it live."

That experiment also set up the band to deliver a mix of tempos and styles on 1990's *Seasons In The Abyss*. Backed by money from Def American, the label Rick Rubin founded after leaving Def Jam, it also saw Slayer film music videos for *War Ensemble* and the title track – the latter a big-budget epic shot in Egypt, with a full complement of horse riders and the pyramids as a backdrop. Both received heavy rotation on MTV, and Kerry says it was "another piece in the puzzle of world domination, getting into as much media as people could see and hear".

The album broke the Top 40 in the US album charts and the Top 20 in the UK, making it their biggest-selling album. The rest of the 90s were not quite so kind, however. Dave departed again (to be replaced by former Forbidden drummer Paul Bostaph) and, like many other metal bands, they struggled with the changing musical landscape. The end of the decade saw them release 1998's divisive *Diabolus In Musica*, which saw Kerry step back from songwriting and the band dip into groove and nu metal with mixed results. The new millennium saw them roar back to form with the blistering *God Hates Us All* in 2001.

"I realised I messed up by not being as focused," says Kerry. "Jeff realised the same thing, and I think that's what made that album particularly sound like it has teeth. That one was like, 'Hey, we messed up the entire thing in the 90s, but now we're back and pissed off!'"



Slayer (left to right) in 2007: Jeff Hanneman, Dave Lombardo, Tom Araya, Kerry King

"JEFF WAS A GOOD FRIEND, AND I LOVED HIM"

KERRY KING

Dave would also return to the fold for the next couple of albums, before leaving once more following 2009's *World Painted Blood*. That would also be their last with Jeff Hanneman, who tragically died of liver failure in 2013.

"He came in, he introduced the band to punk," says Kerry of his late writing and six-string partner. Good friend, and I loved him. It's hard to put into words but, I often think, 'What would Jeff think of this album?', be it *Repentless*, be it [Kerry King solo album] *From Hell I Rise*. I'm like, 'I think Jeff would like this record,' because Jeff was still a metalhead too."

2015's *Repentless* would be the band's last studio album, and Slayer announced their farewell tour in 2018 – with their final show taking place at the LA Forum on November 30, 2019. Except, it turned out that it wasn't quite the last. They performed at a couple of US festivals last year and have two huge headlining shows lined up in Cardiff and London this summer, as well as Ozzy Osbourne's farewell Back To The Beginning show in Birmingham.

"I don't want to confuse this for fans. Slayer is not going to tour anymore. We come out, we do special occasion shows so people can come check it out," Kerry says. "I'm super-happy to be part of the last Black Sabbath show. That means more to me than I could ever convey."

They'll be seeing off some true icons at that show, but Slayer's own legendary status as one of the most explosive and influential metal bands of all time is already assured. **H**

SLAYER HEADLINE CARDIFF'S BLACKWEIR FIELDS ON JULY 3 AND LONDON'S FINSBURY PARK ON JULY 6. THEY ALSO PLAY THE BACK TO BEGINNING SHOW AT BIRMINGHAM'S VILLA PARK ON JULY 5

"THRASH METAL PERFECTION!"

Five key Slayer albums



THE DEBUT

Show No Mercy, 1983
Recorded with virtually no budget, Slayer's debut sounds ramshackle when compared to their later work. It was also critically reviled at the time, but took the nascent thrash sound to a faster, nastier place that would be hugely influential on extreme metal to come.



THE THRASH PINNACLE

Reign In Blood, 1986
Four decades on, *Reign In Blood* remains absolute thrash metal perfection. Rick Rubin's production and the band's mechanistic performance trimmed absolutely all fat from the bone. The result was just less than half an hour of music that would change metal forever.



THE EVOLUTION

Seasons In The Abyss, 1990
Having achieved peak thrash with *Reign In Blood*, Slayer started experimenting with slower tempos on *South Of Heaven*, and achieved the perfect balance between speed and heft on *Seasons In The Abyss*.



THE DIVISIVE ONE

Diabolus In Musica, 1998
The 90s were a tricky time for thrash, and Slayer responded by embracing certain elements of the groove, alternative and nu metal scenes that had supplanted them. It wasn't a great idea, and *Diabolus In Musica* remains the least loved entry in Slayer's back catalogue.



THE LATE-CAREER CLASSIC

World Painted Blood, 2009
Slayer put out some great albums in the new millennium, but this was the best, partially revisiting their vicious early output. It would also be their last with the classic line-up, as Dave Lombardo left for good in 2013 and Jeff Hanneman passed away soon after.

MARILLION

The challenging times of making
Afraid Of Sunlight, their final album for EMI.

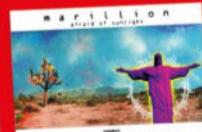
PLUS Steven Wilson, Katatonia, AVKRVST, Elder, Hawkwind,
Jon Anderson and loads more...

MEGA
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1
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2
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3
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PROG

ASTOUNDING SOUNDS
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MARILLION

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Afraid Of Sunlight at 30:
A triumphant farewell to EMI

PLUS

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BAUMANN, KATATONIA, ROBERT REED, LARS
FREDRIK FRÖISLIE, JOHN HACKETT BAND,
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Slaughter To Prevail
are creating quite
the hulla-baloo



SLAUGHTER TO PREVAIL

Grizzly

SUMERIAN

Bear-obsessed deathcore A-listers flex their muscles



THE WORLD OF deathcore is notoriously dogmatic. Escaping from its sonic boundaries and attempting to appeal to a broader fanbase can be hazardous for any band in the scene. Take Suicide Silence, who decided to radically change their sound on 2017's self-titled album and promptly found an online petition trying to stop the record from getting released. Only

a trio of bands – Bring Me The Horizon, Lorna Shore and Whitechapel – spring to mind when counting genuine deathcore crossover success stories. Although with *Grizzly*, Slaughter To Prevail might be able to complete the Mount Rushmore of great deathcore escapistologists.

The Russian-born, Orlando-based band (with the exception of British guitarist Jack Simmons) have amassed a sizeable following, thanks in large part to their striking, masked aesthetics and the impressive growls, unquestionable charisma and Instagrammable bear-wrestling skills of frontman Alex Terrible. But they've seemingly been

content to lean heavily on a formula of breakdowns, chuggy riffs and naked, hostile aggression. Meaty and satisfying, yes, dynamically interesting, not so much.

While there was much more of a nod to melody in 2021's *Kostolom*, *Grizzly* provides a quantum leap in the sheer scope of what STP are aiming to create. The first shock comes halfway through the opening song, *Banditos*. A groove-laden tornado of riffs and Alex's trademark belch gives way to a mariachi snippet, before the band come marauding back in again. Standard deathcore this is not – more the sort of trick oddball hardcore legends The Chariot might pull. Love or hate the song, it's

GRIZZLY PROVIDES A QUANTUM LEAP IN STP'S SCOPE

Turnstile: where Hall & Oates, hardcore and landmark status meet



TURNSTILE

Never Enough

ROADRUNNER

Baltimore's hardcore punk chameleons hit critical mass

IN TERMS OF mainstream acceptance and commercial reach, Turnstile might already be the biggest band in the history of hardcore. Their third studio album, 2021's *Glow On*, was a proper smash hit, seeing the band embraced by everyone from the US talk show circuit to Glastonbury Festival. Due to Turnstile's gloriously upbeat, melodically sun-kissed sound, some punk purist bores would deny that they are part of hardcore at all. Of course that's easily disprovable bullshit. Not only have Turnstile graduated from the highly respected Baltimore underground scene that gave the world the likes of Trapped Under Ice and Angel Dust, they share obvious musical DNA with the legendary likes of Bad Brains, CIV and Shelter – all of whom similarly embraced fun, lent heavily on a positive message of unity, and created some wonderfully pop hook-filled music in the process.

Arguably, though, none of them have pushed the envelope as far as Turnstile – not only in terms of the sonic influences, which include alternative hip hop, yacht rock, funk metal and shoegaze, but in the sheer scale and

number of people they've reached. Get *Never Enough* right, and Turnstile could be sitting on a landmark record the like of which this genre has never seen: hardcore's answer to Nirvana's *Nevermind*. And, if it doesn't happen with this fourth full-length then forget it, it never will.

Never Enough is not just a brilliant album, it's that rarest of things: an album that feels like it's going to move the needle and reshape both the perceptions and the ceiling of a genre.

The sparkling synth that vocalist Brendan Yates croons over at the start of the opening title track is a beautiful way to open proceedings, and when a crunching half-time guitar, a propulsive rolling drum rhythm and a solo that sounds like Zakk Wylde playing The Stone Roses comes in, everything is elevated. It fizzles away before tagging in the mosh-stomp of *Sole*, a spectacular way to start the record.

From that point on, the quality never dips, Turnstile managing to somehow wrestle glorious pop nous nuggets from a punk

rock framework. *I Care* combines hardcore two-stepping with shades of The 1975; *Dull* sounds like Sick Of It All meets Blur; *Seein' Stars* mashes up Hall & Oates' AOR pop with Jawbreaker's gruff energy; and *Dreaming* is Gorilla Biscuits-go-mariachi. On paper it sounds like a gimmick and a potential disaster, but these songs are incredible. The highlight is the six-minute-plus *Look Out For Me*, which sounds as much like The Police and Tame Impala as it does Militarie Gun. It's everything that makes Turnstile such a unique and special band.

It's so unique that it's hard to really know who Turnstile's current peers are, relevant forward-thinking contemporaries being few and far between. Irish indie rock crew Fontaines D.C., who utterly revolutionised post-punk with last year's *Romance* album, are contenders, but in hard rock circles you'd probably have to go back to Bring Me The Horizon's *Sempiternal* to find something that instantly felt like such a clear, era-defining blockbuster. *Never Enough* puts Turnstile where all the best bands end up, on an island of their own creation, and it's going to be huge.



FOR FANS OF: Beastie Boys, Bad Brains, Title Fight
STEPHEN HILL



CRYPTOPSY

An Insatiable Violence

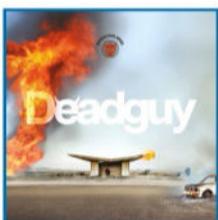
SEASON OF MIST

Canada's dexterous death metallers go back to the future

The knowledge that the majority of Cryptopsy's ninth album was written on tour days off casts a sharp light onto the fierce immediacy and alacrity erupting throughout. From the piston-pulsing riff of opener *The Nimis Adoration* to epic closer *Malicious Needs*, *An Insatiable Violence* sounds like it's late for an appointment with an atomsmasher as complexity, brutality and intricacy are fused. In addition to the melodic strength and grooves powering *The Art Of Emptiness*, there are healthy references to the band's classic works: *None So Vile* on *Until There's Nothing Left* and *Blasphemy Made Flesh on Our Great Deception*. These, combined with Christian Donaldson's dissonant chord structures and outsized soloing, and Flo Mounier pushing limits from behind the drumkit, make for an immense addition to the canon of both band and genre.

FOR FANS OF: Dying Fetus, Gorguts, Suffocation

KEVIN STEWART-PANKO



DEADGUY

Near-Death Travel Services

RELAPSE

New Jersey's mathcore pioneers reignite three decades of hurt

It's been 30 years since New Jersey noisecore innovators Deadguy released their sole studio album, *Fixation*

On *A Co-Worker*. That record played a pivotal role in inspiring the likes of The Dillinger Escape Plan, Botch and more, achieving near-mythical status in the process. Now, following Deadguy's shock 2021 reunion, *Fixation...* has a follow-up. To say underground hardcore fans are excited is a serious understatement, and *Near-Death Travel Services* delivers. The band still conjure the mathy, chaotic hardcore they pioneered, and it's a sound so utterly, wantonly destructive that it still feels thrilling and dangerous. Add frontman Tim Singer's viscously barked, bug-eyed diatribes and wild tales ranging from having his wife and job stolen to street coke dealers, and Deadguy 2025 are still capable of dragging you into their bleak and hopeless world. Unquestionably this year's finest comeback.

FOR FANS OF: Botch, Drowningman, Coalesce

STEPHEN HILL



DEATH PILL

Sologamy

NEW HEAVY SOUNDS

Ukraine's hardcore punk agitators find melody amid the mayhem

Death Pill's second album begins with a defiant call to arms: 'FUCK THE SYSTEM!' There are no prizes for guessing who the Ukrainian trio's fury is aimed at; this follow-up to their 2023 self-titled debut was written following the Russian invasion of their home country, and it barely pauses for breath, with 10 tracks flying past in under 25 minutes. The trio – Mariana, Anastasiia and Natalia – pack a lot into that fleeting journey. Anger spills over on *Craterface* and *Monsters (In My Brain)*, spit flying as they

FOR FANS OF: Death, Pestilence, Sadist

DOM LAWSON

switch between hardcore, punk, grunge and 80s thrash. Yet, their heavy blend can't hide just how melodic these choruses are, with closer *Pro Yarika* capturing the band's ability to meld sweet vocal harmonies and rabid screams, a clompy sweet and sour stomp that would give Brody Dalle herself a run for her money.

FOR FANS OF: L7, The Distillers, Black Flag

DANNII LEIVERS



GRUESOME

Silent Echoes

RELAPSE

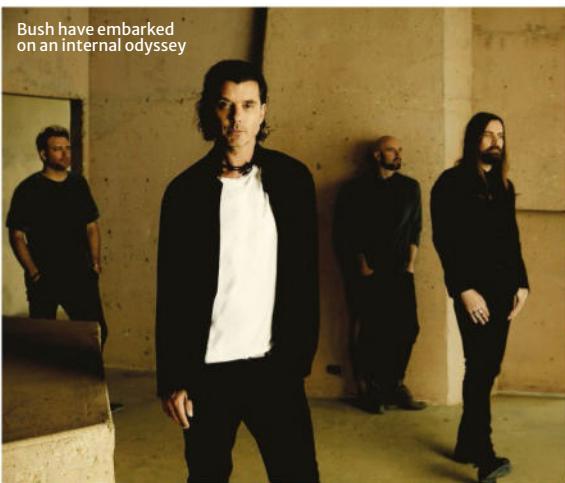
Deathly diehards are still in league with Chuck

After two widely lauded albums of old-school death metal, composed in tribute to Death's first three albums, Gruesome have taken a bold step into more progressive territory. Their third album is very specific in its aims: Death's masterpiece, *Human*, is the direct and proudly proclaimed inspiration, right down to a crisp, gritty sound that absolutely reeks of 1991. Death metal is full of bands recreating the classic sounds of 30 years ago, but Gruesome are far smarter than the retro-minded average. Songs such as *Condemned Identity* and *A Darkened Window* could genuinely be mistaken for outtakes from Chuck Schuldiner's archive, but this is no exercise in lazy mimicry. Instead, Gruesome have conjured a set of intricate and incendiary new songs that capture perfectly the spirit of a golden era. This rips, and Chuck would definitely have approved.

FOR FANS OF: Death, Pestilence, Sadist

DOM LAWSON

Bush have embarked on an internal odyssey



BUSH

I Beat Loneliness

EARMUSIC

Post-grunge icons go in search of spiritual healing

ON BUSH'S LAST album, 2022's *The Art Of Survival*, frontman Gavin Rossdale turned his pen towards outside forces, with songs influenced by politically charged topics ranging from reproductive rights to climate change. *I Beat Loneliness* is a much more inward-looking album. Some of the titles – *Everyone Is Broken*, *Love Me Till The Pain Fades* – read like they've been cribbed from a grunge/emo crossover handbook. But there's an importance to being earnest, and Gavin imbues the songs with emotion and a little more nuance than the titles suggest.

Musically, it presents as anyone who's followed the band's latterday career might expect, following in the footsteps of *The Art Of Survival* and 2020's *The Kingdom*. There are still streaks of the pop-rock and electronica that accompanied the band's original reformation, but they're bolstered by the big grunge riffs and thrusting dynamism of their early days. Opener *Scars* is a case in point, riding in on a pulsing electronic beat before bursting into a pneumatic riff and a big singalong chorus. The title track treads similar ground, with churning guitars, melodic swells and more soul-searching lyrics.

The album is a little lopsided, with the big rock beasts loaded towards the front. The gears change just after halfway through, with *We Are Of This Earth*, a wonderfully atmospheric hippified jam complete with jangling guitars and groovy percussion. *Everyone Is Broken* is a dramatic ballad, balancing fragility and bombast in a way that you can already picture blowing the roof off auditoria in teary mass singalongs. Bush do both sides of the equation equally well, and *I Beat Loneliness* is never less than a well-constructed slab of modern hard rock with a strong melodic sensibility and just enough nostalgic glances to the past. It's an amalgam of the band's different eras that will delight fans without causing too many jaws to drop.

FOR FANS OF: Silverchair, Fuel, Superheaven

PAUL TRAVERS





Heaven Shall Burn:
still finding green
shoots 10 albums in

HEAVEN SHALL BURN

Heimat

CENTURY MEDIA

German metalcore stalwarts hit the big 10 with aplomb

HEAVEN SHALL BURN

celebrated a quarter of a century since their formation in style, with 2020's *Of Truth And Sacrifice* reaching the top of their German homeland's album charts, and a headline spot at Wacken following three years later. It was nothing less than the band deserved for their consistent delivery of seismic Gothenburg-style riffs and hardcore bite. But what was more impressive was that the feat was achieved with their most ambitious outing, both in terms of length and sonic exploration.

While its follow-up, their 10th album, clocks in at a beefy 55 minutes and throws in a few surprises, it's the most streamlined the band have sounded in years, and it hits the sweet spot from the off. *War Is The Father Of All* advances on symphonic wings, before a Machine Head groove and harmonics interject in what could be the most epic song in the band's discography. While *My Revocation Of Compliance* and *Confounder* won't win any awards for originality, the regal melodeath guitars and hammer-blown percussion rarely fail to provoke a thrilling adrenaline spike.

As ever, Marcus Bischoff's caustic vocals feel like a revolutionary call to arms at every turn, whether on *Those Left Behind*'s savage sermon or the more emotive reflection of *Ten Days In May*. A faithful if diluted version of Killswitch Engage's *Numbered Days*, featuring Jesse Leach, ticks their obligatory cover box, but far more convincing are their own hook-laden *Empowerment* and *A Whisper From Above*. To complete the victory, Maik Weichert and Alexander Dietz raise the standard with the glorious, windswept twin guitars of *A Silent Guard*. Having gained far less acclaim outside of Germany, and with metalcore's other seasoned veterans now riding a mini-renaissance, *Heimat* is a worthy milestone and a gateway for anyone who may have criminally overlooked Heaven Shall Burn.

FOR FANS OF: The Halo Effect, Darkest Hour, Killswitch Engage

ADAM BRENNAN



HELHEIM

HrabnaR / Ad Vesa

DARK ESSENCE

Viking black metallers take a twin-track towards transcendence

Helheim's latest is a metaphysical trip through grief, grandeur and Norse cosmology. This record sees the band's composers, V'gandr and H'grimnir, splitting songwriting duties, including vocals, summoning wildly distinct yet unmistakably Helheim visions. Blistering black metal riffage crashes into proggy mysticism, with tracks like *Mennesket Er Dyret I Tale* roaring through the fjords while *Fylgja* lifts off into cosmic introspection. It's sorrowful, spiritual, and shamanic BM as séance. The sheer depth of composition feels like spelunking in a mythic chasm. Synths hum like ancient spirits, guitars glisten with a psychedelic sheen, and Hrymr's drums keep the ritual grounded. This is Helheim reborn – once again.

FOR FANS OF: Windir, Havukruunu, Panopticon

JOE DALY



IMHA TARIKAT

Confessing Darkness

PROPHECY PRODUCTIONS

German berserkers feed the pain on fourth full-length

In a scene crawling with wannabe misanthropes, there's something terrifyingly authentic about Imha Tarikat. Mainlining his personal demons and the prejudices experienced as a man of Turkish descent growing up in Germany,

frontman Kerem Yilmaz infuses *Confessing Darkness* with a naked fury, steam-rolling hurt under floodtides of unfettered emotion while drummer Jerome Reil lays down irresistible blasts of tub-busting battery and occasional dynamic change-ups. Buried beneath avalanches of fret-hopping riffage, *Excellent Grief* and *The Day I Died (Reborn Into Flames)* land their emotional punches with punkish brio, and a rare intensity fraught with real passion.

FOR FANS OF: Bölzer, Chaos Invocation, Suffering Hour

SPENCER GRADY



JOHAN LANGQUIST THE CASTLE

Johan Langquist The Castle

I HATE

Candlemass frontman seeks out fitting new territory

After recording session vocals for Candlemass's epochal 1986 debut, *Epicus Doomicus Metallicus*, Johan Langquist seemingly vanished, only resurfacing as the Swedish doom titans' full-time frontman in 2018. They've kept him busy ever since, even if subsequent material has seldom proved worthy of their early legend. Rounding up the seven tracks that Johan self-released digitally last year, his rugged, phlegmy old-man growl seems less wayward here than on much latter-day Candlemass – or perhaps it just better fits his solo band's breezy, bluesy hard rock MO. Sprinkled with symphonic textures and operatic back-ups, with no weighty legacy to navigate, *Johan Langquist The Castle* may be his consistently strongest work since 1986.

FOR FANS OF: Black Sabbath, Deep Purple, Rainbow

CHRIS CHANTLER

SMALL MERCIES

Where EP is short for 'Epic Potential'



ARCHERS

Temporary High

SBG

A one-stop shop for all your alt needs, this EP embodies a Slam Dunk festival ethos. Its invigorating mixture of metalcore, emo musing and anthemic pop punk sees Archers shoot for the stars and stick the landing.

FOR FANS OF: Bölzer, Chaos Invocation, Suffering Hour

SPENCER GRADY



RAVINE

Chaos And Catastrophes

RIPPLE MUSIC

This Portland doom band's five-tracker boasts a new, harsher vocalist and more elaborate songs, with psychedelic flourishes and a Yob-esque mysticism creeping in to their swampy stoner grooves.

FOR FANS OF: Candlemass, Dark Funeral, Immortal



SERPENT CORPSE

Retaliate

TRANSCENDING OBSCURITY

Proudly flying a tattered flag for Canadian DM, Serpent Corpse are a filthy throwback. From the fiery *Brazen Serpent* to towering, thrill-ride *Meteor Summon*, this is a fearsome manifesto for reanimated brutality.

FOR FANS OF: Candlemass, Dark Funeral, Immortal

DOM LAWSON



LERA

Rêverie
SUBSOUND

Post-rock newbies find some grit in all the wrong places

Post-rock requires an incredible lightness of touch. It's like filmmaking; something as simple as a hokey line of dialogue or a shit wig can snatch you out of the moment and make the whole thing ring hollow. For all their obvious ability, newcomers Lera haven't nailed the magic formula just yet. They're working with sturdy building blocks – the slow-to-boil pomp of Explosions In The Sky, chiming Pelican-esque riffcraft, and the lost, mumblefuck vocals of Slint or Rodan. But there's something in the knit that throws things off, like sand chafing your crack during a romantic beach-side walk, or the smell of farts at a funeral. As a young band with plenty of talent these criticisms aren't disastrous, but between now and their next release Lera need to focus on detail work if they ever want to rub shoulders with the greats.



FOR FANS OF: King Woman, Frayle, Mogwai

ALEX DELLER



MOTÖRHEAD

The Manticore Tapes
SANCTUARY / BMG

Metal's most essential power trio get their roots revealed

"If we moved in next door, your lawn would die," said Lemmy in 1975, announcing the arrival of a band who would become one of the greatest ever. After the

abortive first line-up and recordings that would see the light as *On Parole*, they eventually coalesced as the classic trio that blazed a trail followed by heavy, thrash, death and black metal bands, as well as punk and hardcore outfits the world over. Everyone starts somewhere, and *The Manticore Tapes* represents the very first recordings with Lemmy, Fast Eddie and Philthy Animal. Sure, you've probably heard *Iron Horse* and *Motörhead* a million times, but this is a glimpse into the birth of the legend. Here the garage and proto-punk roots really show – more MC5 and Pink Fairies than later recordings. Essential? Maybe not, but an absolute joy for fans.



FOR FANS OF: MC5, Ramones, Hawkwind

ALASTAIR RIDDELL



PERPETUAL PARADOX

Deathwish

SELF-RELEASED

London tech deathcore crew make a forceful entrance

Following a string of promising EPs, this London quintet hurtle through their debut in a succinct 28 minutes of technical deathcore. Although aiming for an ambitious chorus on *Backbone Of Existence* and delving into haunting spoken word on the title track, Perpetual Paradox's strengths lie in ripping through dizzying riffs and tight rhythms. *Forgiveness Is A Weakness* throws out an arsenal of syncopated riffs amid Will Armstrong's pinpoint drumming, while the fiddly *Self/Gravity* and flurry of *Ash And Blood* show clever interplay between strings and percussion. There are Gojira-esque string scrapes aplenty breaking up the twin leads and gruff

breakdowns of *Unhealable Wounds*, while all remaining vitriol is unleashed on the quiet/loud dynamics of closer *Into The Void*'s wall of strings with Adrian Caucelo's raucous vocals adding to the constricted cacophony. An assured and determined introduction indeed.



FOR FANS OF: After The Burial, Shadows Fall, Decapitated

ADAM BRENNAN



ROYALE LYNN

Black Magic

EPITAPH

'Redneck Rockstar''s alt rock makeover only goes skin-deep

Back in 2022, Royale Lynn asserted that the world would be a happier place 'if we all drove trucks'. Three years on, the self-proclaimed 'Redneck Rockstar' has adopted a far gloomier tone. *Black Magic* ditches the cowboy boots in favour of glossy six-inch platform heels, drenching Lynn's happy-go-lucky country twang in brooding alt metal.

However, despite adopting the gothic attire and alt rock antagonism, *Black Magic* isn't a particularly bewitching debut. From the crash of *Greed* to the venomous *Dragon*, Lynn dilutes her unique country edge in favour of hard rock cliché. It's shallow too; *Dark Mode* depicts the life of an emo outcast with a laughable chorus of 'It ain't just my phone on dark mode' and a breakdown entirely lacking bite. This record is a rebrand that barely understands the scene – much like when Lynn rebranded as 'punktry', despite never sounding punk.



FOR FANS OF: Halestorm, Seether, The Pretty Reckless

EMILY SWINGLE



Mawiza mark out new territory on the global metal map

MAWIZA

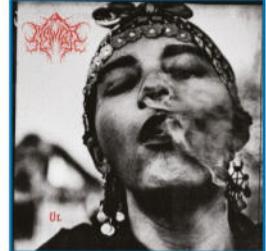
ÜI

SEASON OF MIST

Mapuche metal crusaders find their tribal groove

FROM BLACKBRAID TO

Alien Weaponry, metal is increasingly becoming a space for disaffected Indigenous peoples to rage against colonialism while championing their cultures' music and values. Mawiza, based in Santiago, Chile, join the scene from the Mapuche Nation: a South American group who spent centuries fighting off oppression from European settlers.



The groove metal band 'formed' in 2021, after vocalist Awka Mondaka got more in touch with his heritage and decided their previous, Spanish-language name was no longer appropriate. Since then, they've re-recorded their old material in Mapudungun, the Mapuche tongue. In the last two years alone, they've signed to Season Of Mist and supported Slipknot, King Diamond and Gojira.

ÜI ('Chant') marks the four-piece's first original music under the 'Mawiza' moniker, and it suggests more staggering milestones will come. Sung entirely in Mapudungun, it's as thematically enlightening as it is musically distinct. Opener and lead single *Wingkawnoam*, for example, pairs its barrelling guitar chords with the kultrung, a traditional drum, while Awka shouts about the sanctity of Indigenous territory.

The rest of the album is full of lessons on culture and myth, from *Ngulutu*'s narration of Spanish/Mapuche conflicts to *Pincha Ni Pewma* relaying a dream about the natural world. All the while, the melodies of Mapuche rituals are embedded amid the scraping, stomping metal. *Mamüll Reke* pairs its discordant opening notes with folkish whistling in seamless fashion.

The most affecting track, though, is finale *Ti Inan Paw-Pawkan*. With a climax that layers hulking riffs and the screams of Gojira's Joe Duplantier atop native chanting, it's brutal, poignant and the strongest statement of Mawiza's potential to date. Even at this early stage, these up-and-comers feel close to fully formed and vital to listen to.



FOR FANS OF: Gojira, Orbit Culture, Soulfly

MATT MILLS



DARON MALAKIAN AND SCARS ON BROADWAY

Addicted To The Violence

SCARRED FOR LIFE

System Of A Down guitarist keeps his creative juices bubbling

AS IT STANDS in 2025, the chances of us ever getting a new *System Of A Down* record look pretty dismal. In 2020, it took a bloody conflict in their Armenian homeland to get the band into the studio and record two tracks. *Protect The Land* and *Genocidal*

Humanoidz were bittersweet reminders of just why we fell in love with SOAD's zany, scattershot metal in the first place, and just what a vital voice the band are in a world hellbent on repeatedly scraping itself across the bottom of the barrel. But another half decade has since passed.

Thank God, then, for guitarist Daron Malakian, who's continued to fill the void by writing bonkers, fury-fuelled bangers for his side-project Scars On Broadway. Given that Daron wrote the lion's share of SOAD's output, it's not surprising that this third album is everything fans have been hankering for. Opener *Killing Spree* lurches between about three melodies, each of them as irresistible as the last in a hail of shred, chug and eyewatering lyrics: 'It's going to feel like Jesus is coming back! It's going to feel like a shot of fucking smack...'. *Satan Hussein* opens with a rousing chant of 'Quaaludes! Vicodin! Chinese Cups and Echinacea!'. Either track would have felt at home on any SOAD album. Manic and forcefully earwormy, with a biting political undertow, the latter warns: 'I'm the neighbourhood watch, a machine gun in my crotch... Thou shall not kill'. *The Shame Game* opens with the same sense of creeping dread as SOAD's *Aerials*, before veering in a more whimsical direction.

On a record that is unmistakably the work of its creator, there are left turns. *Done Me Wrong* breaks midway into a loopy, Armenian-folk power-keyboard solo. *Destroy The Power* is like a game of whack-a-mole veering between a Ghost-like choral hymn, prog and nu metal crunch. It is never once boring. In a world where we can't have *System Of A Down*, this will more than do nicely.



FOR FANS OF: *System Of A Down*, *Ghost*, *Korn*

DANNI LEIVERS



SIGH

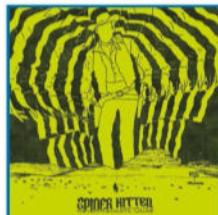
I Saw The World's End – Hangman's Hymn MMXXV
PEACEVILLE

Japan's black metal renegades reimagine their wildest ride

Avant-metal godfathers Sigh released their seventh album, *Hangman's Hymn*, in 2007, an exhilarating mash-up of vituperative Germanic black-thrash and symphonic flamboyance. Few complained about the record's flat, murky production, given its dazzling compositional ingenuity and manic eccentricity, but it failed to live up to frontman Mirai's sonic ambitions. Hence this complete re-recording – paying off instantly in the beefed-up blast of the guitars and the full dynamic whack of the orchestra. Arguably the most dramatic improvement is in the drums, ex-Fear Factory machine-man Mike Heller spinning the arrangements into orbit with his propulsive artistry. It's crazy how much more excellent they've made an already excellent album sound.

FOR FANS OF: *Sodom*, *Beethoven*, *Cradle Of Filth*

CHRIS CHANTLER



SPIDER KITTEN

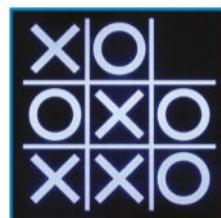
The Truth Is Caustic To Love
APF

Wild Welsh vets whip up some sludge spaghetti

Remember *Iron Gland*, the 44-second lowest ebb of sanity on Alice In Chains' *Dirt* where they recruited Tom Araya to scream pure pain? If you extended the sensation to album length

it might lose its potency, but not, Spider Kitten posit, if you also broke it up with spaghetti Western folk interludes and psychedelia. *The Truth Is Caustic To Love* kicks its feet through an imagined Death Valley with distorted bass billowing forwards and anguished blues vocal harmonies. With many tracks dotting back and forth in stunted 90-second-or-so bursts, it's a little bitty and formless as a whole, with each new idea being so abbreviated.

FOR FANS OF: *Melvins*, *Weedeater*, *Alice In Chains*
PERRAN HELYES



BLAXEM

Ethereal Eclipse

Bucking their national trend for old-school filth, this Chilean quartet channel their fury into honed but heavy modern grooves, razorwire riffs and choruses that soar briefly above their dense war zone.

FOR FANS OF: *System Of A Down*, *Gojira*, *Behemoth*
JONATHAN SELZER



STRAY FROM THE PATH

Clockworked

SHARPTONE

Long Island's hardcore lifers bow out on a high

Stray From The Path have continually thrived over the past 20 years, integrating raw hardcore with more djent, nu metal and dark elements. *Clockworked* is their final album, but the chemistry and visceral fury remain as the band harness chaos and tight musicianship. Will Putney's production is on point and Craig Reynolds crashes the drum kit. *Shot Caller* is deliciously enraged, *Bodies In The Dark* has a brutally bleak industrial vibe, and the title track has incendiary spoken word and swirling, off-kilter fretwork. The songwriting is as catchy as it is aggrieved, and even the more straightforward *Can I Have Your Autograph* is unapologetic and sticky.

Steeped in socio-political discontent, this arms SFTP brilliantly for their upcoming farewell tour.

FOR FANS OF: *Fever 333*, *Rage Against The Machine*, *Comeback Kid*

NIK YOUNG

CHEPANG

Jhyappa

RELAPSE

Nepal-born and NYC-based, Chepang are itinerant grindcore evangelists. More overtly metallic than ever, *Jhyappa* manhandles traditional grind until it mutates into a churning, esoteric blitzkrieg.

FOR FANS OF: *Death*, *Aborted*, *Abigail*
DOM LAWSON



SYMPOBIA

Hideously Traumatic

COMATOSE MUSIC

There's heaps of Suffocation-worshipping brutality on this debut album from Indonesia, with numerous pinch harmonics and more vocalised squeal than an industrial-scale piggy slaughter.

FOR FANS OF: *Death*, *Aborted*, *Abigail*
SPENCER GRADY

WORLD SERVICE

Heavy metal uprisings from around the globe



BLAXEM

Ethereal

ECLIPSE

Bucking their national trend for old-school filth, this Chilean quartet channel their fury into honed but heavy modern grooves, razorwire riffs and choruses that soar briefly above their dense war zone.

FOR FANS OF: *System Of A Down*, *Gojira*, *Behemoth*
JONATHAN SELZER



STRAY FROM THE PATH

Clockworked

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LIVE REVIEWS

BABYMETAL

POPPY / BAMBIE THUG

O2 ARENA, LONDON

Kawaii metal superstars prove themselves the hyperreal deal

IN THE PAST six months, the O2 Arena has hosted some of metal's biggest moments, from Sleep Token's two-night takeover to Ghost's jaw-dropping spectacle. And now it's Babymetal's turn, headlining their largest UK show to date as part of their world tour. Metal is thriving, with live shows that are bigger, bolder, and more spectacular than ever – and the most impressive might just be this one, tonight.

Visually fierce and unapologetically queer, **BAMBIE THUG** kicks things off with witchy punk spirit that's all fetishwear, glam horror and glitchy club culture. From the moment *Hex So Heavy* blasts through the arena's PA, the set is all strobe, sub-bass and sharp choreography – a testament to Bambie Thug's singular vision – while songs like *Bye Boy* and *Redrum Rave* deliver an onslaught of vibe, visuals and violent catharsis with some hard truths. Menacing Eurovision cut *Doomsday Blue* gets a little lost under the weight of its backing track, but it's *Last Summer (I Know What You Did)*'s obliterating bass, briefly transforming the O2 into The Ministry Of Sound, that serves up the night's ultimate curveball.

Once a fringe oddity in the heavy world, **POPPY** now stalks its main stage with eerie ease. While her set tonight is succinct and rather clinical (she barely addresses the crowd), it's packed with bangers from *Scary Mask* to a throbbing *V.A.N.*, which reveal Poppy's slamming growls and the chops of her band. Songs are mostly separated by a childlike disembodied voice, but it's Poppy's singing voice – pure, childlike and unsettling – that really shines, slicing through the air like a scalpel. *I Disagree* hits hard, *Concrete* remains hilariously disturbing, and *A New Way Out* really lingers, inching Poppy ever closer to arena-filler with terrifying ease.

And then it's time for the arena conquerors. Eleven years on from their very first UK appearance, at Sonisphere Festival, tonight's sold-



Bambie Thug casts a spell over the O2

out show promises to be a landmark event for the Japanese phenoms, and boy, does it deliver. The moment the lights drop, *Babymetal Death* detonates with a wall of pyro that could take your eyebrows off, and from there it's full throttle: massive LED screens, drones zipping overhead, strobes, cameras sweeping across a sea of flailing arms, and a runway that turns the pit into part of the performance. The high priestesses of kawaii chaos, Su-Metal, Moametal and Momometal, command the stage with total control. Su-Metal's vocals are razor-sharp tonight, soaring clean and powerful with the occasional flash of grit. Meanwhile her sisters-in-arms move with machine-tight synchronicity. It's huge, it's relentless, and it's absolutely glorious.

Megitsune and *Pa Pa Ya!!* kick the crowd into gear, scarves spinning overhead in a blur of colour and rhythm. A blistering solo from the Kami Band leads into *Metal!!!*. Heavy, groovy, and complete with a full-audience crouch and jump, it launches the arena into spring-loaded euphoria. Tom Morello plays the solo on record, but tonight it's all Kami Band, and it sets the tone for what follows: a run of fresh tracks from *Metal Forth*, Babymetal's upcoming, star-studded

THE SET
BABYMETAL
Babymetal Death
Megitsune
Pa Pa Ya!!
BxMxC
Metal!!!
Kon! Kon!
Sunset Kiss
Song 3
Headbangee
-eeerrrr!!!!
Ratatata
Gimme Chocolate!!

ENCORE
From Me To U
Karate
Ijime, Dame, Zettai
Road Of Resistance

album that shows just how far their sound has stretched.

Kon! Kon!, built with Bloodywood, is bouncy and brutal in equal measure, its breakdowns landing with full force. *Sunset Kiss* drifts in on a wave of bright, J-pop shimmer, its live debut matched with soft gold lighting from the stage. Then *Song 3* goes the other way, easily the heaviest track of the night. The crowd roars back the "ichi-ni-san" chants while Alex Terrible's colossal growls boom from the screen. Later, their Electric Callboy collab *Ratatata* – also from *Metal Forth* – dials things into full party mode, with its "Fufu" callouts, pogo-pulse riffs, and a prelude of crowd-cam joy as fans cheer every time a youngster flashes up onscreen.

As the end of the night approaches, *Gimme Chocolate!!*, performed from a rising platform, is greeted like a returning hero. Then comes the final run of *Karate*; *Ijime, Dame, Zettai*; and the surprise return of Poppy for *From Me To U*.

It would be easy to get lost in the noise and spectacle, but at its heart, this is still a band built on trust. Trust between three performers who know each other inside out. Trust between Babymetal and their audience, who have no doubt been phenomenal tonight, cheering, chanting, moshing, whirling scarves, and screaming back every callout. And as the night ends on *Road Of Resistance*, that connection feels bulletproof.

As the confetti rains down, Su-Metal addresses the crowd in a heartfelt speech. She thanks the UK for always welcoming Babymetal, from their earliest festival slots to tonight's milestone moment, and recalls Sonisphere as the place where it all began. Her English falters slightly, but the sincerity doesn't. It's a genuinely moving moment. If Babymetal are the future of metal performance, tonight was the proof, and the O2 their coronation.

HOLLY WRIGHT

Momometal, Su-Metal and Moametal stun their faithful fans



LIVE REVIEWS

DESERTFEST 2025

VARIOUS VENUES, CAMDEN

Earth, Elder and Zeal & Ardor replenish Camden's annual stoner/doom/psych oasis

HAVING BRANCHED OUT into more leftfield realms in recent years, 2025's Desertfest is focusing on its core mission: to provide a home for the weightiest and most psychedelically aerated practitioners of the riff.

LOWRIDER's brand of sandblasted stoner rock is pretty much the epitome of what the festival was created for – heaps of fuzz, massive riffs and a rolling groove that's impossible to resist. With riffs not so much repetitive as needlessly insistent, **ÅRABROT**'s journey from industrial-ravaged noise to elegant art rock still suggests there's something unclean lurking in their midst. Kjetil Nernes's Gary-Numan-as-vaudeville-villain vocals and Karin Park's swathes of keys and haunting vocals turn the flower power of T. Rex's *Children Of The Revolution* into something more threatening. It's a startling-sounding set, and luminous like the glint of a knife.

Topping the bill on Friday, **ELDER** perform their celebrated third album, *Lore*, in full to mark its 10th anniversary. In an Electric Ballroom filled with transfixed gazes, the Massachusetts psych metal heroes captain an odyssey of technically astounding, spooling riffage, cementing their new headliner status with extraordinary ease.

KONVENT's mesmeric, slow-motion metal fills the Roundhouse with foreboding aplenty on the Saturday. The Danes' doomed death metal transports you to early 90s Peaceville releases, and the foursome look perfectly at home on such a big stage as their treacle-thick riffs take on increasing emotional weight.

Live, **CONAN** are less doom monoliths than an hour's worth of granite masonry being flung in your general direction by a hungover Goliath. Backed by projections of 70s warrior-stuffed movies and cartoons, their set finally takes on enough critical mass for a pit to break out halfway through, as Jon Davis's wind-tunnel howl sounds like it's trying to hold in a prolapse. In contrast, **PALLBEARER**'s doleful doom brings an introspective, sombre mood to the



THE SET
ZEAL & ARDOR
The Bird, The Lion
And The Wildkin
Wake Of A Nation
Götterdämmerung
Ship On Fire
Erase
Gravedigger's
Chant
Fend You Off
Kilonova
Blood In The River
Run
Tuskegee
Row Row
To My Ilk
Sugarcoat
Death To The Holy
Devil Is Fine
Trust No One
Don't You Dare
I Caught You
Clawing Out

Roundhouse. Brett Campbell's butter-soft vocals are as heartbreakingly beautiful as ever, but the set too often wanders, instilling sleepiness rather than brooding bliss. As terrorising and sublimely beautiful as the battering blizzards that surround them on screen, **AMENRA** restructure minds into a new form that stops reality from ever feeling the same again. The post-metallers are a transcendental anxiety attack, frontman Colin H. van Eeckhout shrieking out through clouds of smoke, seemingly overwhelmed by the disarming emotional resonance of his own performance.

PLANET OF ZEUS bring the heat of a Greek summer to the Underworld, along with big rock riffs and hooks. Their catchy party stoner-meets-arena rock goes down a treat with the packed room.

Saturday headliners **ZEAL & ARDOR** might be contextual wildcards, but they drill down into stoner/doom's blues roots, draw out its defiance and occult entreaties, then wrap them in staccato, party-starting grooves with all the force of a deity-powered generator revving into life. Despite claiming he's "not much of a talker", Manuel Gagneux is an engaging

frontman, and aided by a spectacular live show, he sends the crowd wild.

Dedicating their performance to "The land, the water, the people", **DIVIDE AND DISSOLVE** on the Sunday are a mix of contrasts; heavenly and hellish, casual yet earnest. Takiya Reed begins each song by layering an unearthly melody on her sax, before taking up her bass and annihilating its beauteous effect with unholy doom, each note hitting like the fist of a vengeful god. From the moment the Ballroom's screen starts spewing alien broadcast graphics and **Ilion**'s hyper-ventilating groove kicks in, **SLIFT** have a frenzied crowd fully in their slipstream. Songs career like they're bouncing off the walls of 2001's Stargate, Jean Fossat howls like a seer having vision overload, and their cosmic thrill-ride taps an endless source of energy to spectacular effect.

CALIGRAM are part black metal, part hardcore and a whole load of ferocious. The multi-national quartet move between lush post-rock and epic metal with the assured ease of a band well into their second decade. **DOPELORD**'s low-slung stoner doom riffing is cut from the wizard's cloth with more drug references than you can shake a bong at. A head-nodding, hazy and very heavy affair.

The misaligned logo projected behind Sunday headliners **EARTH** spells 'Heart', and it's apt for a 90-minute set that probes its deepest ventricles with an otherworldly level of care and grace. The reverence in the Ballroom is palpable, as Dylan Carlson and his band weave lifetimes' worth of adversity into an organic take on Americana that exists on its own glacial timeframe, as if operating a distillery for redemption.

Providing a coda, Canterbury's **FAMYNE** deserve a far larger setting than the Black Heart. The vampiric stateliness of Tom Vane's vocals resemble an old Count, while his band provide a steady backing of hard-hitting, gothic doom to close out Desertfest in imperial style.

ALASTAIR RIDDELL / LIZ SCARLETT /

JONATHAN SELZER

Zeal & Ardor raise the spirits at the Roundhouse



Årabrot adopt a missionary disposition



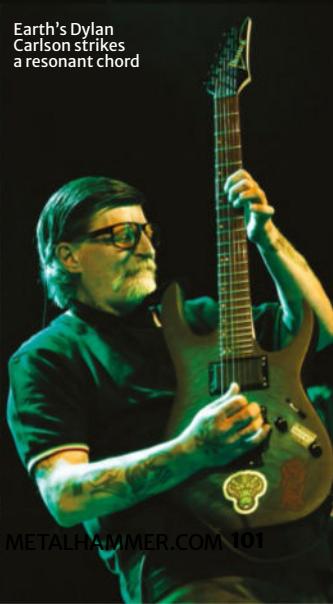
Konvent call upon the angels of death-doom



Elder embark on a psych-prog odyssey



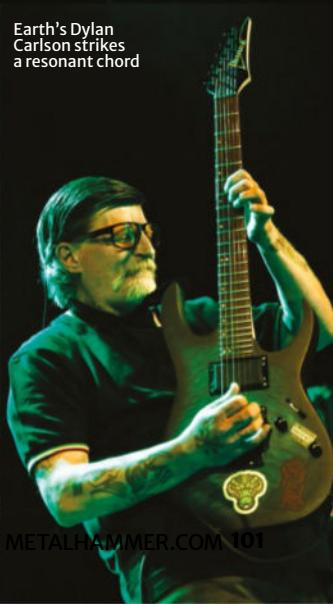
Divide And Dissolve attempt to bring the house down



Conan wage war on the senses



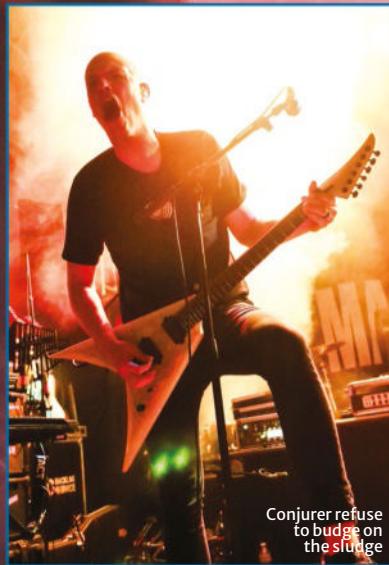
Divide And Dissolve attempt to bring the house down



Earth's Dylan Carlson strikes a resonant chord



Make Them Suffer
swap the banter for
certified bangers



Conjurer refuse
to budge on
the sludge

MAKE THEM SUFFER

RESOLVE / CONJURER / IF NOT FOR ME

02 ACADEMY ISLINGTON, LONDON

Perth's metalcore maestros lead a legion of the new heavy

FOLLOWING LAST YEAR'S well-received self-titled album and a tour with UK heavyweights Bury Tomorrow, Aussies Make Them Suffer are in more intimate confines for their sold-out headliner tonight. Even with earlier doors and glorious sunshine in the capital, there's a solid crowd already in for openers **IF NOT FOR ME**. Their take on modern metalcore isn't the most inventive, but they're energetic and get a warm response from the crowd, if not a particularly mobile one.

With their sludgy extremity, **CONJURER** stick out like a sore thumb on this bill, but they're undeniably excellent. They open with the thundering *Choke*, guitarist/vocalist Brady Deeprose nonchalantly grinning "What's up, Islington?" before its thunderous breakdown. *Scorn* revels in unease and bludgeoning riffs, and *Rot* creeps in with menace before pummelling the room into submission. "We are a metalcore band," Brady deadpans, before playing brand-new track *Warmth*, whose riff-fuelled fury isn't a million miles in tone from debut album *Mire*. While people seem to file out to the smoking area or merch before the finale, it's a very high bar they've set nonetheless.

France's **RESOLVE** are a very different proposition, their synth- and electronics-laden

metalcore echoing Northlane. While the crowd love it, there's a disconnect between the crunch of the guitar tone and the lack of actual heft. They love snare bombs and subdrops, littering *Death Awaits* and *Molotov* to the point of overuse, but the sheer energy and enthusiasm for performing, along with the adoring crowd, carries them through.

MAKE THEM SUFFER have no such consistency issues. *Epitaph* explodes into life, keyboardist/singer Alex Reade's voice soaring gracefully for the first of many times while its breakdown heaves and roils. It's followed by the swaggering *Bones*, which has the whole room yelling every line back. Lead vocalist Sean Harmanis demands more and throws himself around the stage, getting just as much energy back in the huge pits, singalongs and fist-pumping that are a constant presence. "We've got a lot of fucking songs to get through," he grins early on, and he's not wrong, with the band speeding through a 13-song setlist and keeping banter to a minimum to stuff in more bangers. It pays off, too. The front turns into a constantly moving sea of bodies both behind and going over the barrier, as Make Them Suffer stake their claim to being one of metalcore's finest live acts.

WILL MARSHALL

FORTRESS FESTIVAL

THE SPA, SCARBOROUGH

Back for its third year, Fortress Festival's beckoning of a throng of black metal fans to Scarborough's seaside resort seems to rewind the clock through the town's history. Punters might be eating ice creams to beat the heat, but Vikings once raided this place and Anne Brontë is buried here, in the shadow of a castle where hundreds died in a Civil War siege. Bleakness is in the land.

It's the perfect location for **DARKHER**, who christens Fortress's candlelit theatre stage with the spectral doom of *Hollow Veil*, giving any travellers a real taste of Northern England. On the main stage, the seaside suits **THE GREAT OLD ONES** too. Their primordial rumble stops just short of calling Cthulhu himself to crawl out of the bay, as *Antarctica* gives a tremolo-heavy festival its sludgiest, meatiest riff.

Now fronting his own project, **RUIM**, ex-Mayhem visionary Blasphemer is every bit the becloaked dark lord, but inviting 1349's Ravn to front 90s Mayhem classic *I Am Thy Labyrinth* sets the place alight. **1349** are a less dynamic Saturday headliner and oddly less visually impressive, despite the introductory fire-breathing. However, drummer Frost can blast like Alfred Nobel, while *Hellfire* classic *I Am Abomination* and newer cuts such as *Striding The Chasm* alike send the audience into the night air in a bludgeoned daze.

The d-beat-powered epic guitar heroics of **DÖDSRIT** are enough to slap anybody awake on Sunday. Their boundless energy, drawn from Sweden's crustpunk scene, sets them apart here, even before *Irlala*'s leads hit outrageous Maiden-worthy heights, giving them an incredible UK debut. Kiwis **ULCERATE** don't even seem to be on the same planet as everyone else. The three alleged humans onstage play with alien intelligence, as cuts from their last two albums constantly reorient themselves in real time for the weekend's most sonically obliterative set.

UKBM faithfuls **FEN** revisit 2009 debut album *The Malediction Fields* for a one-off set – a welcome reminder of the particular dreary beauty of this blackgaze metal innovation from when *Sunbather* was but a glint in Deafheaven's eyes.

"This is a song from our new album... that came out 11 years ago!" Headliners **AGALLOCH**'s return to the UK after a decade has drawn devoted fans from across Europe. As they open with all 10 exquisite minutes of *Ghosts Of The Midwinter Fires*, only to cascade into the oddly hard-rocking revelry of *Hallways Of Enchanted Ebony* and *Falling Snow*, this is a dream achieved for a generation of black metal fans. Now, how about that new album for real?

PERRAN HELYES

Scowl are no jokers when it comes to hardcore punk



SCOWL

MODERN COLOR / BODYWEB / PLASTICS

THE DOME, LONDON

Post-hardcore hi-risers bring their energy to the next level

SCOWL'S EVOLUTION BEYOND the bounds of the hardcore scene is mirrored tonight in a diverse choice of support. **PLASTICS** kick off the night with furious punk, stalking the stage as they peel off raucous calls to action and a few bodies start to whirl around the beginnings of a pit. Leeds' **BODYWEB** mix skittering electronics and nu metal in a similar vein to early, er, *Vein*, and the front of the room immediately kicks into gear to open the pit. Disappointingly, the mix muddies much of the vocals and guitar, subsumed by over-loud bass. Debuting new material pays off, however, as the already-invested front rows lap it up and heads are nodding even at the back.

MODERN COLOR are a markedly different prospect, slotting in far more with the headliners' expanded sonic

palette than they might've done before. Melding indie with a melodic hardcore undercurrent, it's quite unlike anything on the bill so far. The Californians are contending with a noticeably thinner crowd at the start of their set but don't seem fazed by it, grinning as they spot a stagediver who ends up simply dropping onto their feet at the front rather than jumping. For all the laconic vocals and laid-back guitar, it's deceptively energetic and possesses some real heavy moments.

SCOWL are simply on another level, though. Vocalist Kat Moss has that often-elusive 'it' factor, with an onstage attitude that screams 'rock star in the making'. Opening with the scathing *Wired* from 2023's *Psychic Dance Routine* after a short burst of reggae over the PA, stagedivers appear

almost immediately as its two-stepping riff hits. "London, let's have some fucking fun!" she exclaims, before launching into *Fantasy*, with its huge 90s alt rock hooks, from new album *Are We All Angels*. The crowd bellow the guitar hook from *Psychic Dance Routine*, while the beloved *Bloodhound* gets the front of the room spinning.

Scowl thrive in these smaller, barrier-free shows, feeding off the crowd's energy, with bodies diving off the stage even as the band hurtle round it. "This isn't our first time in London, but it might be my favourite show here," Kat grins early on, and with the wild reception they get, it's easy to see why. Much has been made of their move to a major label, but Scowl haven't lost an ounce of their live intensity.

WILL MARSHALL



Will Gould and Hannah Greenwood: bonded by bloodlust

CREEPER

LOWEN

KOKO, LONDON

Southampton horror punks mark the end of a chapter in flamboyant form

WELL, THIS IS snug. Seven months to the day after co-headlining Wembley Arena with Black Veil Brides, Creeper are gracing the almost-10-times-smaller Koko to mark the end of their *Sanguivore* album cycle. Unsurprisingly, hundreds of black-clad goths storm the sold-out venue early to get a good spot, meaning openers LOWEN are met with a heaving auditorium at 7pm.

On paper, getting the UK-by-way-of-Iran outfit to open a show such as this seems ludicrous. That's because it is. Rather than glam/punk bangers, the four-piece deal in twisted riffs and progressive melodies, inspired by figurehead Nina Saedi's Middle Eastern roots. The music and her powerful vocals seem to still tonight's onlookers in awe. Though there's no moshing and minimal headbanging, the end of every song is met with impressed cheers, as are several of Nina's piercing cries. A risky swing that ends up in a home run.

Theatrical since day one, CREEPER commence their set with an 'AV club': two face-painted actors who introduce the following 'movie' of their *Sanguivore* era. The sense of melodrama is instantly amplified by *Further Than Forever*, a 10-minute giant that crosses Meat Loaf with the Misfits. Koko's hordes scream every word back at frontman Will Gould, only growing louder with *Cry To Heaven*'s infectious chorus

straight afterwards. "You're one of the noisiest crowds we've ever played to!" the vocalist repeatedly declares.

The rest of *Sanguivore*, which is getting played in full and in sequence, shows Creeper's complete range. *The Ballad Of Spook & Mercy* brings keyboardist/backing singer Hannah Greenwood to the foreground, her pristine pipes juxtaposed with Will's drawl. *Chapel Gates* is a horror punk scurry that evokes the band's early days in the Southampton scene and kickstarts an enthusiastic pit. Lastly, piano ballad *More Than Death* finds the band at their sweetest and gentlest, ending the main set with another euphoric singalong.

The encore is a conveyor belt of old favourites that crescendos with *Misery*. The closing number sees the audience's voices overpower Will's, who can only look on in disbelief while the bridge and chorus are wailed without him. At any other concert, that would be the grand finale, but the excitement continues afterwards: a muscle-bound executioner walks onstage, the curtain drops, and a short film is screened to announce a new album, *Sanguivore II: Mistress Of Death*.

A rapturous conclusion to one cycle and an exclusive nod towards the next? Tonight has been the best night to be a Creeper fan.

MATT MILLS



All hail the Mistress Of Death!

INCUBUS

02 ARENA, LONDON

Tonight Incubus play 2001's *Morning View* in full. A landmark album, it took their funk-infused alt rock and dialled up the Californian vibes. And as *Nice To Know You* fills the 02, nostalgic warmth flows. *Wish You Were Here* launches a joyful singalong, and *Just A Phase* features lasers bursting through dry ice in a reflection of the record cover. Frontman Brandon Boyd and guitarist Mike Einziger cultivate intimacy by sitting at the front of the stage for *Mexico*, the singer even going in for a hug. "Hey Brandon, why did you choose violence there at the end?" quips Mike, their bond evident. But it's *Warning* that hits hardest, lyrics such as 'Don't ever let life pass you by' cried by 20,000 people who took them to heart from first hearing. As the set progresses, Incubus loosen up. *Are You In?* transforms into Phil Collins' *In The Air Tonight*. Cheesy? Sure, but it kinda works. *Under My Umbrella* breaks into Rihanna. Though when they finally reach *Aqueous Transmission*, there's a spiritual sense of closure. The promised 'hits' encore delivers with a heart-exploding *The Warmth*, the danceable *Vitamin* – including a bit of Portishead's *Glory Box*, revealing new bassist Nicole Row's vocal talents – and a blissful *Drive*. Perfect.

ELEANOR GOODMAN

SYLVAINE

OSI AND THE JUPITER

DOWNTAIRS AT THE DOME, LONDON

Aside from the universal constant of two guys who can't read a room, there's an air of hushed reverence permeating the venue, in part for a cult band playing their first UK show, but also because OSI AND THE JUPITER's music is built from such delicate strands you fear they might break under the slightest infraction. Their Americana meets carefully strummed neo-folk is riven with luxurious cello and offered like a sacred confidence at a campfire. If their cover of Alice In Chains' *Nutshell* lacks the authentic gravitas of the original, it's a gateway into their intimate, autumnal mood. Kathrine Shepard, aka SYLVAINE, inspires an even more rapt level of dedication. It's a mark of her songcraft that, in tonight's solo guise without a backing band, not only does her music scale down so well, it's given new room to reveal untold layers beneath the originals' blackgaze dynamism. Amid guitar tones like blushed watercolours, her voice is a rich, windblown current. Through the luminous contours of *I Close My Eyes So I Can See*, a cover of 40 Watt Sun's devastating *Restless* and Nordic lament *Eg Er Framand*, she embarks on an immersive journey through loss, wonder and liberation that carries the most far-reaching of emotional charges.

JONATHAN SELZER

PORTALS FESTIVAL

EARTH, LONDON

Julie Christmas and Kalandra give London's post-rock gathering a climactic send-off

PREPARE TO READ the prefix 'post-' plenty of times. Since 2018, Portals has been London's go-to festival for all things forward-thinking, uniting the best in post-rock, post-metal and beyond, across two days. This year sadly marks the final edition, but the organisers have corralled one hell of a line-up to bow out with.

On Saturday, **BRONTIDE** ditch post-rock's traditional fannying about, opting to strike with riff after cathartic riff. Guitarist Tim Hancock's use of looper pedals means there's no room for error, yet the risk pays off, with this three-man force dishing out flawless, seismic attacks. Is it any wonder they incite the biggest moshpit of the weekend?

LONG DISTANCE CALLING are similarly efficient on the second stage, the Germans having packed only their heaviest songs for the trip here. Backed by spotlights that flicker in time with every charging chord, they're a multisensory experience that burns retinas. Immediately after, **FOXING** headline the main stage and bring a maelstrom of alternative genres. The Americans cast indie, emo, post-hardcore and even flecks of jazz side-by-side, but, with each song being bridged to the next by some form of ceaseless noise, it all blends into a cohesive, dizzying whole.

KALANDRA headline the second stage in mystical fashion. Frontwoman Katrine Stembekk's elegant voice evokes the aura of Nordic folk, while her bandmates deal in time-travelling music that consolidates prog, metal and electronica. A stunning audio mix and light show combine with the onstage props, including multiple flags, to make the four-piece feel like a bona fide main event.

On Sunday, **AND SO I WATCH YOU FROM AFAR** draw one of the festival's biggest crowds to the main stage, then proceed to get everyone bouncing with their jaunty and energetic post-rock antics. It's headliner **JULIE CHRISTMAS** who ends the weekend with its most dazzling spectacle, though. The post-rock/metal shapeshifter celebrates every aspect of her career, touching on previous bands' material and her transcendent latest solo album, *Ridiculous And Full Of Blood*. Everything explodes from the amplifiers with equally disorienting volume, whether it's alt pop number *Supernatural* or sludge behemoth *End Of The World*. Julie's vocals are so piercing that they stand out amid the clamour, even when paired with the apocalyptic howls of her guitarist/co-vocalist, Cult Of Luna's Johannes Persson. *The Wreck Of S.S. Needle* brings the last-ever Portals to an aptly devastating, cataclysmic finish.

Kalandra bring past and present into perfect harmony



And So I Watch You From Afar reach for the stars

Hey Bambie! You had a photo taken with Babymetal backstage at Download festival last year, and now you're on tour with them!

"Instant manifestation! I'm really excited, and it's lovely as well because the shows are so spaced out, so I'll actually get time off to explore different cities. I'm a little scared to play all my heavy songs one after the other with none of the poppier stuff, but it'll be alright. On my last tour I was so scared I was going to lose my voice, but then I remembered I know what I'm doing."

You've previously mentioned that Berlin is a special place for you, as you spent some time there...

"Berlin was amazing and also very awful. But I came back from Berlin as 'me'. I had, like, seven German men dye and cut my hair off, and they christened me Bambie. I met some of my most cherished friends there, and it sparked my bohemia days and brought me more into the world of goth. There is a thing called astrocartography, which is basically where your ley lines are from your birth chart, where it puts you in the world. One of mine goes through Berlin, another LA, one goes through New Orleans... none go through London, I don't know why I'm here!"

What's something that you always have in your bag or your pocket?

"A protection crystal. I've got my obsidian in my bag, I've always got my phone too, and keys, but never for any house. I work a lot with [goddess and spirit guide] Hecate and one of her things is keys. So whenever I'm out and I see one, I have to buy it, like she sent it to me. Sometimes it's so expensive so I'm like, 'No, Hecate, I can't!'"

You mentioned on Instagram that you'd had an email from the Vatican questioning your symbolism. How did you respond?

"We left them on 'read'! They know the symbolism, they know it's not the Church of Satan. Some churches have pentagrams on the window because they made pagans build the churches. It was

"THE VATICAN KNOWS WHO I AM"

FIVE MINUTES WITH

BAMBIE THUG

The Ouija-pop inventor on obsidian crystals, taxidermy ducklings and alien tattoos

WORDS: JEN THOMAS



funny, I'm like, 'Sick, the Vatican knows who I am.' I mean, I rated the last Pope, so if it was him, cool."

What's the weirdest gift you've been given by a fan?

"The best was a baby doll, but they cut off the body and put them on a bottle, and so there is just the arms, legs and head on a bottle. Another fan made me a taxidermy duckling but it hasn't got to me yet. I love that, though – more taxidermy, please!"

If you won the lottery tomorrow, what fun things would you spend it on?

"I'd love to book out a theme park or a funfair, and take all my friends there with no lines. Just go on copious amounts of rollercoasters."

What was the last tattoo you got?

"So I have a 'doodle arm', where my friends practise tattooing. This one's from Kid Brunswick, and he can't tattoo at all so it's just a doodle. He's the worst – it's my least favourite, but that's fine. My newest one is a little Mexican alien. My friend Callie Cutthroat did that one."

Have you had many younger people, women and nonbinary people in particular, saying that you've introduced them to goth culture or helped them to be more confident?

"Oh, 100%! It's been amazing. Half of my young fans were, like, big Swifties, and now they're always doing goth make-up and stuff. There's been such an amazing outpouring of connections and people making communities through it. I guess they are accepting themselves a bit more, which is beautiful. I'm grateful for that, but it's wild the impact you don't know that you have."

What's on your vision board for manifesting right now?

"I want a charting album. I want a well-received album. I want my own arena tour. I want a world tour! I don't know what the universe has planned for me, but I'm grateful for whatever comes along. You only get one debut, and I'm already really proud of the stuff that I've been making, but I just want to give you something really sick, undeniable." 

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INSTIGATORS

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